

The Playboy King

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[0 : 00] Actually, all these passages are from Luke's Gospel and they're disconnected. For those of you who are following closely, you might have noticed that they are disconnected. And the way you have to read them is the top left and then the next to the right and then to the left and then to the right and then the bottom.

And that's the way we're going to go through them. So you can number them if you want so you don't get lost again. So the thing that I, when you talk about the Playboy King, Hugh Hefner thinks he invented it.

But this is to demonstrate that the problem has been around for a long time. And somebody writing about the development of the sexual emancipation of the 20th century talked about the great strides that were made when Playboy magazine came along and opened up a whole new world of understanding to the male mind at least.

And then along came the feminist movement and Ker-Pow. That was the end of that. So in this story, it's not unlike that in that Herod was certainly into a kind of playboy mode, I suppose. And he was having a stag party with his friends. And that's part of what I want to tell you a little later on. But in the middle of that, his wife had a little plan that was going on in the room next door.

[1 : 49] And the same kind of Ker-Pow happened. And that was about the end of Herod, I think. Not literally, but in some ways it was.

Herod the Great is the one everybody knows from Christmas because Herod the Great was a man who became king, who was king before Jesus was born. And he was in charge. And he had been given the title. And he was the first one to have been given this title because he had powerful connections in Rome.

He had been given the title, the King of the Jews. And then he had been given the backing of some Roman soldiers to go to Judea, to that part of the world, and establish his kingdom. Being given some soldiers to do it with and some money and given the endorsement of the Roman emperor because Rome tended to work this way, that they would go in, take a country, and then set up a puppet king to rule it on their behalf so that he wouldn't be quite such a flashpoint for revolution because he was their king with their name and their religious background.

[3 : 11] And Herod was a very shrewd fellow. He's the fellow whom I think I told you once, isn't it? A lot of people go to Israel today to learn about Jesus, and they'll end up learning about Herod because all the archaeology is connected with Herod.

The things he built and the viaducts he built, the temples he built, the harbors he built, the fortresses he built, so that you learn a lot about this great King Herod. Well, he was the king, and he had been given the title, the King of the Jews. So you can understand how indiscreet it was when three men arrived from the east and said, where is he that is born King of the Jews?

Not some philanderer who manages to carve out a territory for himself and to get a title from the Roman emperor, but somebody who was born to be King of the Jews. And that obviously was threatening to Herod, and that was why you have the story in the Gospels of how Herod went to work and slew all the babies under a certain age in the area where it was reputed that this child was born.

[4 : 33] That was Herod the Great. Well, subsequently he died, and when he died, he divided his territory into three territories, and gave one of them to each of his sons.

And Robert told us all about that in the first section there where it talks about the various divisions that were made between the three sons of Herod the Great.

How one of them was the Tetrarch of Galilee and the other, the Tetrarch of... And those two places in the north, that's the best way to handle it.

And the next one, the Tetrarch of Abilene, my Abilene. So you get that division of the kingdom. And one of them, the one who had Galilee and Perea, was Herod Antipas. And that was the family name of the man from whom Herod the Great had inherited his power in that part of the country.

[5 : 52] So Herod Antipas was named after him. And when Jesus went into Galilee, remember there's a story of him feeding the 5,000.

It's in John chapter 6. And they all gathered, and Jesus took the loaves and the fishes and broke them and gave it to them. And if you read carefully through John chapter 6, you will see, again, the problem raises its head because the crowd that was there and shared in that miraculous meal, it says in John chapter 6, wanted to make him a king.

And the king that was already in place was Herod Antipas. And so there was a certain tension between he whom the crowd wanted to make king and the one who had the authority from Rome who was Herod Antipas.

So you can see the tension. And one of the commentators said that Jesus was fairly careful about this for reasons which you can go on to, you can trace if you look at the next section, the passage that's in the right-hand column.

So it says, with many exhortations, he preached good news to the people. Now that was the ministry of John the Baptist. And I've told you that John the Baptist was in popularity probably way beyond Jesus, even at the height of his ministry.

[7 : 34] John the Baptist was a very famous preacher indeed and had a profound impact on the whole of the country because he preached repentance and preparation for the coming of the king.

So he was there and he had been preaching in the territory of Herod Antipas and it says that Herod had him thrown into prison because as a preacher, he had expressed his views about Herod's marriage.

Now if you were to look at a map of the territory, you would see that where Herod was, and this is how you do a map of the territory.

I've shown you this before, but that's the Mediterranean and this is Jerusalem and this is the Sea of Galilee. And this, which we now call mostly the West Bank, is the territory of Galilee.

And this was the other territory which belonged to Herod down here. And then out here, there was a huge kingdom which spread from way down.

[8 : 47] Well, it was really the site of the war last year, including Saudi Arabia and parts of Iraq. And that belonged to the Nabataeans.

And the Nabataeans have a king who is famous because his name appears in the second epistle of the Corinthians. And his name was Aratas. And Herod found it convenient when he was in charge of this territory and this territory to marry the daughter of the Nabataean king who had this territory here.

And it's not unlike the present situation, you know, where you have these huge Arab soldiers, power concentrated under him.

And so Herod discreetly married his daughter in order to protect his western flank from invasion by the Nabataeans.

And that went along very well for a long time until Herodias began to work on Herod. And she was, in fact, his niece.

[9 : 59] But she managed to seduce him, I guess. And she decided that he should get rid of this Nabataean princess who was then sent home.

And Herodias became the wife of Herod. She had previously been married to Herod's brother. Are you getting all this traitor? Would you like a chart?

And in that first marriage of Herodias, she had had a daughter whom we learned from the contemporary historian Josephus that her name was Salome.

Or you can pronounce it other ways. But that's what was happening. And John the Baptist put his finger on it and said, Herod, you can't do that.

It's unlawful for you to get rid of your wife and then marry your brother's wife. And he said it's immoral. And according to the scriptures, John the Baptist was right.

[11 : 07] But Herod was king. And so that's how John the Baptist got to be in prison. Well, then what happens is that if you look at the next passage, this is now in the left-hand column, this is the

point at which having caught him in prison, and this account really comes mainly from the Gospel of Mark, Herod was somewhere down in this territory here in an old castle.

He was celebrating his birthday and he had invited the boys in for the evening. And they ate well and drank well. And it was then that Herodias sent out the young princess Salome to dance for this gang.

And this lecherous gang, I would say. And she danced a very seductive dance. And at the end of the dance, Herod, with a magnificent sort of gesture of generosity, provoked, I suppose, by the sexually overt display that this dancer had given.

And stimulated by alcohol, he said to her, you can have anything, my dear, up to the half of my kingdom.

You know? There are a lot of men who have made the same promise under similar circumstances and lived to regret it. Particularly when she took it to the lawyer and said, this is what he said.

[13:04] So she said, after consulting her mother, her mother said, I'd like John the Baptist's head on a platter.

And she sobered up the party very considerably when she made this announcement to Herod in front of all his friends. And rather than lose face, he went ahead and did it.

He sent the soldiers down into the dungeon of this castle and had John the Baptist beheaded and brought his head up and presented it to Salome. A gruesome scene, if ever you could imagine one. Well, that was what took place. And it was for that reason that when you come to this next thing, you find that Herod the Tetrarch was perplexed because it was said that John had been raised from the dead.

He must have had a profoundly guilty conscience. And these rumors were going through the country some said that Elijah had appeared, which was the hope and expectation of the people of God, that Elijah would appear.

[14:21] One said the old, one of the old prophets had risen. And, but Herod was convinced when he heard the stories of Jesus coming and preaching in his territory, that this Jesus must be John the Baptist come back to haunt him.

And he was, he was very, struck by that. Well, then if you go to the next passage, you see where John, where Jesus is threatened by the people that Herod's out to get him.

And Jesus calls him that fox and says, I'm going to, I'm, I'm, I'm going to die in Jerusalem. I'm not going to die at the hands of this fellow.

And, and, Jesus avoided a confrontation with Herod. And his ministry went on as he said it would in this passage.

Go and tell that fox, behold, I cast out demons, perform cures today and tomorrow. And the third day I finish my course. You are not going to interrupt what I am doing.

[15:33] I am going to go on doing what I'm doing because I know where I'm going and I know that it's in Jerusalem and it's not here. So, that took place.

There is one other item which, which I could just fit in at this point and that is that this Nabataean king attacked Herod subsequent to Christ's death, actually, and very badly defeated him.

And, that was taken by the people to be a sign of vengeance upon Herod for his having put John the Baptist to death.

But, in the last passage on that page, you come to, you come to that very sort of poignant encounter now between Jesus and Herod.

and it came after Jesus had gone to Jerusalem, had been arrested, had appeared before Pilate and Pilate was unable to make up his mind what to do because he was caught in a kind of political trap and he thought, what I'll do is I'll wash my hands of this man and send him to Herod who happens to be in town for the Passover and since he comes from his territory, Herod can make up his mind what to do with him and then I won't have to deal with him.

[17:10] And so he sent him across town to Herod and Herod confronted him and it says that Herod had been anxious to see him because one of the other gospels tells us that Herod had spent a lot of time talking to John the Baptist when he had him as his house guest so to speak.

Well now he was anxious to talk to Jesus and when he confronted Jesus or Jesus was brought before him he was anxious it says to see some sign because he had heard of the miraculous ministry of Jesus and wanted some sign to be performed for his entertainment and he did everything he could to provoke Jesus into saying something or doing something having questioned

him at length and we are told that Jesus said nothing at all.

He didn't reply to this man. He stood before him he had been arrested he was under arrest but he said nothing to him.

Fascinating sort of you know that this was the man who had put John the Baptist to death and so he had nothing to say to him.

And it's fascinating to consider you know at what point do we get to in our lives where Jesus has nothing to say to us you know that we're at that point where there's nothing to say.

[18 : 54] It's a strange kind of record that's kept but Jesus had nothing to say to him. So what they did was they turned on Jesus and they attacked him and they brought all sorts of invectives against him and they made all sorts of accusations against him and they could get no reply out of him whatever and Herod the man who maintained his honor by commanding that John the Baptist should be beheaded was not going to get trapped into passing judgment on this man who stood before him now.

And so though the chief priests railed and brought terrible accusations against him he listened to them all and he couldn't figure out what to do.