

Title: HEROD'S WORST MISTAKE, MARK 6:14-29.  
(Chatham, NJ; 07/12/09, AM) [D, S-P – Topical Narrative]

Theme: This passage about John's execution reveals many mistakes of Herod, but the worst is the confusion over the identity of Jesus—he thinks John has returned—which is essentially unbelief.

Purpose: To expose the folly of many world leaders and to give the congregation more insight into the evil world they live in.

Introduction:

1. Mark uses the literary device of a flashback to give the reason for Herod's confusion over who is performing the miracles he hears about.
2. Herod Archeleus was the son who posed a threat to Jesus when he was brought back from Egypt in Mt. 2:22.
3. This is Herod Antipas, the son of Herod 'the Great,' who attempted to kill Jesus as a baby. (How poetic that the child lived to haunt the next generation of Herods.)
4. The grandson, Herod Agrippa I, killed James and arrested Peter in Acts 12. (Don't these guys ever realize when they are beaten?)
5. In Mark 6:14-29 reveals Herod's mistakes; one is the worst and accounts for the others.

I. Mistake #1 – His Choice of Spouse.

A. An affair turned deadly.

1. Jewish historian Josephus reports that Herod was on his way to Rome when he stayed with his half-brother Philip.
2. He began an affair with Philip's wife, Herodius.
3. He eventually divorced his wife and married her.
4. John, the Baptist confronted him over the issue, 18, and Herod imprisoned him.

B. Herodius nursed a grudge.

1. Herod protected John. (Friction with his wife over this?)
2. She wasn't the type of person afraid to exercise political clout when to get her way. (It is hard not to see Jezebel reincarnated.)
3. She manipulated Herod—and her daughter—to satisfy her bloodlust.
4. Herod had married an evil, cruel woman.

II. Mistake #2 – His Rash Vow.

- It's his birthday; he invites many dignitaries (21).
- Herodius' daughter dances for him; my guess is that he had too much to drink.
- In almost a fit of delirious passion (?) he offered her a gift.
- Her mother seizes the opportunity at once; the girl doesn't refuse to go along with it.
- She asks for John's head.
- Herod was sorry but not enough to withdraw the request: he was afraid of losing face with all these important people (21).
- That was more important to him than justice.
- Fulfilling the vow reflected the sinister side of image consciousness.
- I have to wonder how the dinner guests reacted! (Callous disregard probably.)

III. Mistake #3 – Herod Executes John.

- Herod was afraid of John on one level for John was a holy man (20).
- He assumes—maybe even hopes—that John has come back to life. (Would this have assuaged his conscience?)
- Yet his standing with all the leading people of Galilee—and probably his standing with his wife—was more important than John’s life.
- John was a throw-away, a useless garment, and a person of no account.
- John is disregarded for the same reason that entertainer’s funerals get more coverage than the funerals of soldiers: people are blinded by and enamored with fame.
- Celebrities are pathetic substitutes for real heroes who sacrifice themselves for others.
- Herod must protect his own standing in the community; his reputation is more important than a truly holy man and his righteous words.
- Although Amos does not lose his life, he suffers the same rejection and scorn, Amos 7:7-15; Jesus and these two great prophets are threats to the halls of power.
- The Galilean elites do not value nor can they even discern what a truly heroic person John the Baptist is; like Herod they value reputation over righteousness.
- Herod commits murder to protect himself.

#### IV. Herod’s Worst Mistake.

- He mistook Jesus for John, verse 16, and believe it or not this is the source of all his other mistakes though it occurs after all the others.
- Herod lived a life of unbelief, of faithlessness.
- Though fascinated with John (20) he never obeyed him; this is unbelief in a very sinister form: it pays lip service to righteousness but when push comes to shove, unbelief never obeys.
- Faithlessness prevents him from seeing the Kingdom of God right in front of his nose.
- It drove him to take away his brother’s wife.
- It set the stage for him to make a vow on the whim of a momentary feeling.
- His unbelief all but assured that he would rather kill John than be ashamed in front of Galilee’s powerful.
- Not recognizing that Jesus was another even more important man than John was perfectly consistent with a life of unbelief.
- When he finally meets Jesus, Jesus does not deem him worthy of a response, Luke 23: 9.

#### Conclusion:

1. Neither John nor Jesus seeks to become cultural icons; they are genuine heroes.
2. They sacrifice themselves for others.
3. Unbelief is more than not perceiving this; it is a lifestyle dulled and blinded by sin.
4. This mistake led Herod into a whole host of other mistakes and further blindness.
5. Open your eyes to the reality of Jesus and the Kingdom of God; don’t make the same mistakes.