

## Mind of Christ - Lesson 116

July 23, 2021

Welcome to another session of the Mind of Christ. We are making our way through the gospels, of everything Jesus said and did in order to try to understand how He thinks, so that we can develop the mind of Christ in ourselves. We are following along with A. T. Robertson's book, "A Harmony of the Gospels". He divides the life of Christ into various sections, and we are in Section 71 right now, and we will be looking at the text that we'll be studying; it's about John the Baptist. We'll be looking at that text in Matthew, Mark and Luke. Let's read through those texts first and then we'll make our way through this section.

### Matthew 14:1-12

At that time Herod the tetrarch heard the news about Jesus,<sup>2</sup> and he said to his servants, "This is John the Baptist; he has risen from the dead, and that is why miraculous powers are at work in him."

<sup>3</sup> For when Herod had John arrested, he bound him and put him in prison because of Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip. <sup>4</sup> For John had been saying to him, "It is not lawful for you to have her." <sup>5</sup> And although Herod wanted to put him to death, he feared the crowd, because they regarded John as a prophet.

<sup>6</sup> But when Herod's birthday came, the daughter of Herodias danced before them and pleased Herod,<sup>7</sup> so much that he promised with an oath to give her whatever she asked.

<sup>8</sup> Having been prompted by her mother, she said, "Give me here, on a platter, the head of John the Baptist." <sup>9</sup> Although he was grieved, the king commanded it to be given because of his oaths, and because of his dinner guests. <sup>10</sup> He sent and had John beheaded in the prison. <sup>11</sup> And his head was brought on a platter and given to the girl, and she brought it to her mother. <sup>12</sup> And his disciples came and took away the body and buried it; and they went and reported it to Jesus. So that's the account in Matthew. Here's how Mark give the story:

### Mark 6:14-29

<sup>14</sup> And King Herod heard of it, (about Jesus healing many people) for His name had become well known; and people were saying, "John the Baptist has risen from the dead, and that is why these miraculous powers are at work in Him." <sup>15</sup> But others were saying, "He is Elijah." And others were saying, "He is a prophet, like one of the prophets of old." <sup>16</sup> But when Herod heard of it, he kept saying, "John, whom I beheaded, has risen!"

<sup>17</sup> For Herod himself had sent and had John arrested and bound in prison on account of Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip, because he had married her. <sup>18</sup> For John had been saying to Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife." <sup>19</sup> Herodias had a grudge against him and wanted to put him to death and could not do so; <sup>20</sup> for Herod was afraid of John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and he kept him safe. And when he heard him, he was very perplexed; but he used to enjoy listening to him. <sup>21</sup> And a strategic day came when Herod on his birthday gave a banquet for his lords and military commanders and the leading men of Galilee; <sup>22</sup> and when the daughter of Herodias herself came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his dinner guests; and the king said to the girl, "Ask me for whatever you want and I will give it to you." <sup>23</sup> And he swore to her, "Whatever you ask of me, I will give it to you; up to half of my kingdom." <sup>24</sup> And she went out and said to her mother, "What shall I ask for?" And she said, "The head of John the Baptist."

<sup>25</sup> Immediately she came in a hurry to the king and asked, saying, “I want you to give me at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter.” <sup>26</sup> And although the king was very sorry, yet because of his oaths and because of his dinner guests, he was unwilling to refuse her. <sup>27</sup> Immediately the king sent an executioner and commanded him to bring back his head. And he went and had him beheaded in the prison, <sup>28</sup> and brought his head on a platter, and gave it to the girl; and the girl gave it to her mother. <sup>29</sup> When his disciples heard about this, they came and took away his body and laid it in a tomb.

**Luke 9:7-9** covers this in only a few verses.

<sup>7</sup> Now Herod the tetrarch heard of all that was happening; and he was greatly perplexed, because it was said by some that John had risen from the dead, <sup>8</sup> and by some that Elijah had appeared, and by others that one of the prophets of old had risen again. <sup>9</sup> Herod said, “I myself had John beheaded; but who is this man about whom I hear such things?” And he kept trying to see Him.

Again, this was talking about Jesus. When Jesus was doing all these miraculous signs, Herod heard about this and was pretty perplexed about what was really going on here. So, this is Section 71.

There are two settings here. This is after John’s death; *Herod was hearing of Jesus’ work and fearing that John had risen from the dead*. So, that’s one of the settings. The second is *the retelling of the story how John was beheaded and the circumstances* that surrounded the beheading. As we’ll see, Herod feared John before his death, and now, to think he had risen from the dead must have scared him even more.

Herod Antipas heard the rumors about Jesus. Surely he was not the only one who concluded that Jesus was the resurrected Baptist since he too, taught and baptized. There are a lot of things that people were saying about Jesus. You can go back to **Matthew 16:13-14** where the apostles report the many things people were saying about Jesus. This shows that Herod was not a Sadducee since he believed in the possibility of the resurrection; but he was not excited about the idea of someone being raised from the dead.

Herod had a cognitive distortion; he jumped to a conclusion which usually is a sign that we are negative thinkers who expect the worst. Not only was he wrong about John being resurrected; he was also wrong about needing to fear John. *Jesus was the One he needed to be concerned about. He is the One who has the real power to bring Herod into judgment.* John could simply warn Herod of the judgment to come. Jesus could actually pronounce judgment on, or could save Herod if He liked. And Herod did not realize that Jesus would actually become a resurrected person, but not a resurrected ‘John’ ... a resurrected Jesus. Herod was leading a fear-driven life, a life that was based on guilt and that he had allowed himself to be *used by his wife to kill John*. He had a lot on his mind, and these rumors were very unsettling to him. When someone warns you what will happen, and you kill this person and you think they have come back to life, it will cause you a lot of fear.

**Mark** and **Luke** give us more information on this. **Mark** adds that Jesus’ name had become well-known. Here is the word “name” again in **Mark 6:14**. The word “name” 3686 is “onoma” (ονομα) again. This is so important to know.

This is where the *power* is. He is the One with the right name. In His name is power and authority, and it was necessary for His name to become well-known, though often, so far, He would tell people not to tell who He was. But how can people who are healed, raised from the dead, freed from demons, fed and given something to drink; *how can they keep quiet?* But Jesus knew that God will use even this to bring Him to His destination; Jerusalem and the cross.

**Mark** makes clear that Herod's fears are being fueled by what others are saying. It is so common for rumors and misinformation to spread from one to another. *There were several opinions of who Jesus was*. Perhaps He was Elijah, or a prophet like those of old, but Herod kept saying, "John, whom I have beheaded has risen". He went to the conclusion that supported his personal fears.

**Luke** tells us that Herod was perplexed in **Luke 9:7**. The word here is, 1280, is "diaporeo" (διαπορεω). It is a word that means to be utterly at a loss, to be in doubt, and perplexity. It is used in **Acts 2:12** at the pouring out of the Holy Spirit ... they all continued in amazement and great perplexity saying to one another, "What does this mean?" In **Acts 5:24** the apostles were arrested and imprisoned but miraculously were released because the prison was locked ... there were guards at the doors and there was no one inside. The captain and the Chief Priest were greatly perplexed as to what would come of all of this. In **Acts 10:17**, after seeing the vision from Heaven Peter was greatly perplexed in his mind. So those are just some places where this word perplexed is used.

Jesus has this effect on some. They do not know what to make of Him. When men do not accept the explanation that should be apparent, because Jesus is Lord and Messiah, they are left to their own minds to figure it out.

In **Luke 9:9** it says that Herod kept trying to see Jesus. *He couldn't get tickets*. Could it really have been that hard to know where Jesus was and to take his chariot and just simply go there? I wonder how hard he really tried to see Jesus. People will often say they tried to do this or to do that; they just couldn't. *It's usually excuses*. I wonder if Jesus looked like John ... they were cousins. Herod might have fainted if he had actually seen Jesus.

It is interesting that when John was doing his ministry and all were going out to hear him, that people believed he was a prophet ... perhaps even Elijah reincarnated. But then, when he was murdered by Herod, they looked for a new prophet to follow ... a new Elijah instead of the Messiah. There was so much confusion over Jesus' identity when so many clear signs were given.

The key person in this story, I believe, was Herodias who left her husband Philip and married his brother Antipas. The reason for her war against John was that she had a "grudge" 1758 against him (**Mark 6:19**). The word "grudge" here is "enecho" (ενεχω) meaning to hold in or upon; to ensnare, to keep a grudge, to entangle with or have a quarrel against or to urge. So a grudge is something you get entangled in.

The word is used in **Luke 11:53** after Jesus pronounced a set of "woes" the Scribes and the Pharisees began to be very "hostile" (grudge) and to question Him closely on many subjects plotting against Him to catch Him in something He might say.

This word is also used in **Galatians 5:1**. Here it means to be subject to, or to be tangled in a yoke of slavery. *Grudges enslave. They become a person's focus and involve them in plots, in arguments* in their own mind thinking of what to say and how to trap someone, how to get a person to be tripped up and admit that they're wrong. So, a grudge can lead you to many things.

Herodias, out of guilt over her unlawful marriage and not willing to admit wrong, turned her attention to John who confronted the couple with their sin. In her unrepentant heart, she was focused on *shooting the watchdog* instead of the intruder. John's message to Herod was, "It is not lawful for you to have her."

**Leviticus 18:16** says, "One should not uncover the nakedness of your brother's wife; it is your brother's nakedness." **Leviticus 20:21** says, "If there is a man who takes his brother's wife, it is abhorrent; he has uncovered his brother's nakedness. They shall be childless." This is very straightforward. How could there be any room to dispute its meaning? But you can bet in the divorce-remarriage debate, there will be a way to dispute the plain words of this passage.

But it seems to me that Herod knew it was wrong and felt guilty even though Herodias, perhaps, did not. Poor Herod was trapped in a really bad decision. This was a royal scandal. But John became the "skandalon" 4625 (σκανδαλον) to them ... in other words, the stumbling block. They, or at least Herodias, was offended by his judgmental attitude. It is interesting how the person who points out truth is "judgmental", and people use that accusation as an excuse to stay in their sins. They might say, "Well, you didn't ask me to repent very nicely. *This is what got prophets killed!* They preached against sin! They told the truth and told people that God was not happy and they must repent. Boy, is this not popular today in the United States! You might not get killed but you will surely be told to mind your own business and to be more tolerant.

But the multitudes believed John to be a prophet, and they can be more popular with the masses than with the politicians ... especially if the politicians are being told to repent. Even though Herod was king, he was not an all-powerful king. He was wedged in between Roman authority on one side, and other Jewish leaders like the Sanhedrin and other kings, and then the spiritual leaders like the High Priest, and the populace, and his illegitimate wife and step-daughter / niece. Herod was not in a good place; especially when John made it clear that he was a sinner. So Herod was actually in the most difficult place with God Himself because God was not happy with him either. So Herod was just kind of wedged in between all kinds of folks here. I would not have wanted to have Herod's life! He was not in a good place.

What kind of worldly power is it when a person thinks in terms of killing someone for mere personal reasons; not as an act of government justice against clear evil-doers? The thought process which believes that I can and should get rid of anyone who causes me trouble or makes me feel badly or guilty, is filled with self-centeredness and arrogance. To even think this involves:

1. Thinking that I have a **right** to do so – in other words, privilege
2. Thinking that I have the **power** to do so – which 'may' be true

3. Thinking that I will **not be held accountable** or that somehow I can get away with it or justify it; or even more, that *I don't have to justify it*. It's okay because I say it's okay.

**But note:** that the only restraint on Herod is popular opinion **Matthew 14:5**. He feared the multitude. Why ... because a multitude who revolts can bring a leader down and then they will have no power and will be vulnerable. For Herod to hold on to his own life, his power and privilege and wealth, he had to restrain himself from taking John's life UNTIL another pressure got stronger ... actually, a *perfect storm* that involved several different things. So, what is the perfect storm that got Herod into this place where he would actually take John's life?

Let's look at the very aspects of that *perfect storm* for him.

1. The sexual relationship that he had with Herodias. If he wanted to keep living with this woman, he was going to have to do something
2. A twisted relationship between a mother and a sexually charged daughter ... a diva  
We're going to come back to that one in just a moment, but there certainly was a very strange relationship between mother and daughter.
3. Alcohol! Now they were partying! Remember that they were having a good old time when all of this came to a head.
4. Peer pressure of the other influential people in society as opposed to the populace or the multitudes ... so all the influential people of Galilee in Herod's kingdom were there at this party.
5. A leader who is weak morally and in his personality.

We have all of these elements in the story, and it all comes together in order to lead to John the Baptist losing his head.

Here is what God's servant is up against. Herod had to continue to justify his decision to be with his brother's wife, and to keep the affair going. When he married Herodias he also got her daughter who could cause trouble for him with her father, his brother. If you mix some partying into the situation which often emboldens people to do what they will not do when they're sober, and a group of wealthy politicians who keep you in power, and a morally degenerate person and someone is going to lose their head.

There are some other factors in this situation which led to John's death.

1. It was Herod's birthday.
2. Herodias' daughter gave him a gift of a seductive dance. When someone gives us something, we feel obligated to return the favor. Now, we're going to return to this idea of this seductive dance in a moment.
3. Herod makes a rash, impulsive promise *with an oath* before all of these important people. Once an oath is said, and our integrity is on the line, it's hard to back down.

So we have the right day, the birthday which means you have a right to what you want!

Well, that's what you do on your birthday; you get what you want.

We have the law of reciprocity, if you *give* something you *get* something.

We have an impulsive wine-driven oath in which we are trapped.

We have an unethical person willing to exploit this because of her *grudge* based on her guilt.

Now, I've never seen how *perfect* this *storm* is to bring out the dynamics of a sin or a crime. It has multiple elements which combine to make John's death inevitable. To get into the mind of Herod, Herodias and her daughter you begin to understand how all of this could happen.

Mark adds more details. In **Mark 6:21** it says, “**And a strategic day came when Herod on his birthday** ... literally a “coming day suitable” #2121, 2122 “eukairos” (ευκαιρος). It is a day that is timely, it is opportune, it is seasonable, convenient. So in writing this, Mark is making a little bit of a commentary saying, ‘this was a very strategic day’ and it certainly was, not only for John the Baptist but a very strategic day for Jesus and His ministry.

In **Mark 14:11** Judas sought “a strategic day” (at an opportune time) to betray Jesus. Judas sought to betray Jesus at an “opportune” time. We're going to see some other places where the word strategic is used. It is also used in **Matthew 22:16** and **Luke 22:6**. In **2 Timothy 4:2** Paul is telling Timothy to read ‘in season and out of season’ to preach. In other words, always be strategically ready to preach the gospel. In **Hebrews 4:16** it says we draw near with confidence to the throne of grace so that we may receive mercy and grace to help us in our ‘time of need’. Whenever we're in need, this is a strategic time or moment. In **Mark 6:31** Jesus took the disciples to a secluded place to give them an opportunity to rest and to eat; so it was a strategic time or an opportunity for them to rest.

In **Acts 17:21** in talking to the Athenians, Paul spent time with them in hearing and telling something new, so they would come together strategically, if you will, to hear all these new things. Then in **1 Corinthians 16:12** Apollos says he will come when he has an opportunity; when there is a strategic time for him to do so. By chance or by design, the right factors come together for a defining and defeating event to take place. All the factors are right, whether for an affair, a theft, a murder, a lie, or any sin. Factors come together strategically for a sin to take place. When in the heart, there will be a strategic opportunity for sin to happen.

Herod's drunken oath was significant in all of this. It reminds me of the impulsive oath of Jephthah recorded in **Judges 11:29ff**. He so wanted to defeat the sons of Ammon that he vowed to offer as a burnt offering the first thing to come out his house after he returned from the battle. Well, his only child, a daughter, came out in celebration to greet him. His word was more important than his child.

**What do we do when confronted with such a moral dilemma?** Do we break our oath or kill my innocent child? Or is it, perhaps, the third option? Is it to repent of an impulsive stupid oath which should never have been made, or kill my child? ***We need to see the choices for what they are.*** Stupid oaths are binding, but the real sin is in taking the oath in the first place; not so much the breaking of the oath. Yet the daughter saw that since he had given his word to the Lord, he was obligated to offer her as a burnt offering. Well, I'll let you read the rest of that story in Judges 11 to determine what you think actually happened there.

But Herod's deal was not nearly this noble. His oath was not ‘to the Lord’ and it was not for any good purpose like defeating an enemy. He merely promised with an oath to give her anything up to half of his kingdom. The phrase, half of his kingdom, is used in **Esther 5:3** and **Esther 7:2**.

On a particular blog that I was reading at the time when I wrote this, the author notes about this phrase that both kings, Herod and Xerxes (in Esther's day) were non-Jewish kings. The recipients were women and both kings were drunk when they made the oath, and both women had a strong relationship to the king. We know in the case of Esther that she was externally very beautiful; we know that she was a very beautiful woman. I guess the conclusion might be that women and booze just simply don't mix.

Now another site says that Salome's dance is not seductive for two reasons. Now here is where you begin to have this idea of what went on here with this dance that Salome made. There is a website that I found and they "made a case" that this wasn't a seductive dance at all and they gave a couple of reasons. First of all, because it says that she was a little girl. She was a # 2877 "korasion" (κορασιον). Secondly the dance here is #3738 "orcheomai" (ορχεομαι) which is a word that means a playful, goofing off of children.

In **Mark 6:22** we find the word "korasion" (κορασιον). It is a girl, a damsel, or a maiden. It is used in **Matthew 9:24-25** of the healing of the "girl". It is used in **Matthew 14:11** as well. And when you think about it, she was big enough to bring John's head to her mother on a platter. In **Mark 5:41-42** the girl here was 12 years old.

So, we have this other idea about the dance. In **Matthew 11:17** it talks about children in the marketplace dancing. Also in **Luke 7:32** Jesus says, "We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not mourn." So maybe we have the wrong picture here. Perhaps her being young, he had less fear of what she would ask for, since children often want something more simple that gives immediate gratification. Perhaps she would have asked for some candy or some ice cream. I don't know, but children do not know what to ask for and are easily influenced by their elders; and in this case, her mother.

**Matthew** says that she was prompted by her mother to ask. **Mark** says that she asked her mother for advice. **Luke** doesn't really say. The gruesome request had to have come from mom who held the grudge. It was the simplest and quickest way to get rid of John. But a head on a platter at a banquet had to be startling. If not, it is startling! It was not.

I wonder if this traumatized this child. The head was given to the child; to the girl to present it to her mother. *This is a terrible scene*. **Mark 6:25** indicates she wanted it quickly. "Immediately she came in a hurry to the king and asked, saying, "I want you to give me at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter." She came in haste, immediately, right away. Herodias did not want Herod sobering up and changing his mind. So in **Mark 6:27** "Immediately the king sent an executioner and commanded him to bring back his head. And he went and had him beheaded in the prison." I'm not sure where Herod was in relationship to this prison. The prison was in Machaerus according to Josephus in Antiquities of the Jews Book 5.2,18. Now Machaerus is 45 kilometers southeast of Jerusalem on the east side of the Jordan. If Herod was partying in Jerusalem, or somewhere even in Galilee, then it would have taken some time to dispatch the executioners to Machaerus. It is over 27 miles away from Jerusalem. That's 54 miles round trip, across the Jordan River, and as the crow flies, it could have taken at least a day or two to get back; even on horseback. So when we dig into the facts, the picture changes. This is why careful study is required to understand what the Bible is saying. It is certainly now a different picture for me as it relates to Salome. The name is supplied by Josephus ... a name that means 'peace'.

What does one do with the head of an enemy? Well, you display it. You gloat over it. You bask in his silence. John's tongue may have been stilled by the truth, but the truth still lingered in the air.

Both **Matthew** and **Mark** say the disciples went and claimed the body of John and buried it, and they reported it to Jesus. It seems they may have still been on the limited commission when this happened; but were these the twelve? **Matthew** says "His" disciples. So does **Mark** in **Mark 6:29**. But verse 30 says that the Apostles gathered together with Jesus and reported all that was done and taught; more on this. What became of the head? Even though Jesus is not in this section either speaking or acting, He so most assuredly there in people's head.

Remember what prompted the retelling of the story. It's Herod's notice of Jesus and thought that He might be the resurrected John come back to haunt him for his sins. He had a way of making this about him. There is no mention of any second thoughts by Herodias or Salome. They are both left out of the conclusion of the story, but the story gives insight into how Jesus and his messengers affected people in very high places.

This is an interesting story to me because it helps us to not only get insight into some of the things surrounding Jesus but it also gives us insight into human nature and about how people get trapped in some sins. There are lots of elements here.

Again, I'm not sure exactly how to take the idea of Salome with whether or not she was a very young girl and she was doing some innocent dance and he thought it was cute and he made this offhanded comment about giving her up to half of his kingdom or whether or not she was actually dancing seductively in front of this crowd. I'm not sure which one it is but perhaps we get the wrong picture in our mind about exactly what did happen.

Well, this is the end of this section for today. Next time we'll take up Section 72 which is *a major shift* in Robertson's chronological sequence. We move into a whole different way of looking at the life of Christ in this next regard.

Thank you for joining us and I hope you will stay with us for a while. We're going to make a few more recordings here. I'm not sure how long we will go exactly, but we'll be around for a month or two at least. We hope you will stay with us.

Thank you and have a good week. God bless

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