

A King's Rejection

Matthew 14:1-13 - NCBC, July 19, 2020

Main Point: **Herod's life pictures the destruction of unbelief.**

- Herod's family relationships picture the perversion of unbelief (3-4, 6-11)
 - Unbelief fuels sexual lust
 - Unbelief cannot satisfy your soul's longings
- Herod's fearful reactions picture the root of unbelief (1-2, 5, 9)
 - Unbelief competes against God's glory (1)
 - Unbelief lives for human approval (5)
 - Unbelief sins because of its pride (9)
- Herod's final rejection pictures the end of unbelief (10; Luke 23:8-12)
 - Unbelief values entertainment more than worship (Lk 23:8)
 - Unbelief suppresses justice for human praise (Mt 14:10-11)

Application: **Satisfy your life in the glory of King Jesus!**

Opening Announcements:

- **Remember to visit mynCBC.org** and follow our NCBC Facebook page to stay informed on all ministry/event updates during this season of careful regathering.

¹ 1 Corinthians 1:30-31

- **Life Group Signups!** Connect to God's design for biblical community. Most new groups start in September and meet weekly or every other week.
- **Sunday, July 26th, at 9:30am** everyone is invited to a special training on how to reach farther through Community Outreach. Elder Kyle Krall will be leading an interactive hour of training where each attendee will learn to quickly share the Gospel with a simple drawing and compelling explanation. Don't miss this!

<<All I have is Christ>>



The reason we gather every Sunday morning is to boast in our Lord. He is our wisdom, our righteousness, our sanctification, and redemption.¹ Jesus is our life, and we love to proclaim it!

If you're joining us online, we are so thankful to worship with you! Please notice the links alongside this livestream offer fill-in-the-blank sermon notes, the preaching manuscript, and children's coloring pages to assist your worship. At any time you may pause this video, print those files, and then rejoin our worship with those helpful notes in front of you.

Before we read the Scripture together, our church has the special privilege today of commissioning a new Global Outreach Partner!



In just a few short weeks, Cameron and Ro Dobbins and their children will be moving to Greensboro North Carolina, where Cameron will begin a 2-year internship with King's Cross Church.

So I'm going to invite the Dobbins family up on the platform, along with any elders who are present in this service.

Cameron and Ro have been active members of New Castle Bible Church for the last 3 years, and it has been our church family's joy to sponsor Cameron's seminary education and intentionally develop Cameron for spiritual leadership through a pastoral internship and our Elder-in-Development training.

In God's mercy towards our church, the first man to satisfy our Elder-in-Development learning objectives has been one of our African-American brothers! So congratulations Cameron! We love you and thank God for all that He

continues to do in and through your life and ministry alongside us.

Typically, when someone completes our Elder-in-Development training, we'd have a formal ordination service where we'd officially ordain Cameron as one of our active elders.

However, the last several months, Cameron and our elders have been in communication with the elders at King's Cross Church in Greensboro, North Carolina. And today it is our joy to officially commission Cameron as one of our supported Global Outreach Partners as we transfer the spiritual authority for the Dobbins family to the elders at King's Cross Church.

For the next 2 years, Cameron be serving as a pastoral intern for King's Cross church, responsible for starting their biblical counseling ministry, while he completes his online seminary education which he began here with us.

We are very excited for Cameron's future as we partner with King's Cross to continue to develop Cameron for the long-term goal of pastoral ministry in Christ's church.

We want you to know that our elders have committed significant funding from our general fund budget for the next two years to help King's Cross compensate Cameron for his schooling and internship. King's Cross is a newer church plant without a lot of resources, so we also want to encourage you to prayerfully consider partnering financially with King's Cross Church over the next two years to aid their ability to compensate Cameron.

We've set up a designated giving line time for Cameron on our church website and app, so you can give one-time or recurring gifts anytime through New Castle which will be passed along directly to King's Cross for this purpose. Checks can be written to New Castle Bible Church, with "Dobbins Support" in the memo, and each month we will pass along our church's financial partnership to King's Cross for their use in paying Cameron.

We are praying that God will provide enough financial partnership from us that Cameron would no longer require full-time employment in addition to this internship. We've been so thankful for his employment, but we recognize it's difficult to juggle the demands of full-time employment, seminary education, and the pastoral internship. So please prayerfully consider linking your generosity with Cameron and Ro for at least the next 2 years which should allow him to finish his seminary education and complete his King's Cross internship. I can't think of a greater investment than equipping Cameron Dobbins for future pastoral ministry in Christ's church!!

So then this morning, we want to pray for this dear family that has been such an encouragement to our church the last 3 years. As our elders gather around them to lay hands and pray for them, would you just reach out your hands as a symbol of united affirmation and commissioning as we prayerfully send them to North Carolina as our representatives for the glory of God?

<<Elder Prayers>>

Amen. Cameron and Ro – we love you and your family dearly. Thank you for sharing your lives and your love for

Jesus with us all. Is there anything you'd like to say to our church family as we send out you from us?

<<Cameron's Words>>

Thank you. It's never easy to send some of our best people away for the glory of God...but Jesus is worth it! For New Castle Bible Church exists for the glory of God – not to build our own glory here and now.



So please open your Bible to **Matthew chapter 14** as we prepare to read Scripture together. Last week we studied unbelief from the perspective of the common people of Nazareth. Today we're going to sing the same chorus, a little bit louder, a little bit worse. For today we study unbelief from the perspective of King Herod.

Please stand for the public reading of God's Word as I read from **Matthew 14 verse 1**, in the ESV:

At that time Herod the tetrarch heard about the fame of Jesus,² and he said to his servants, "This is John the Baptist. He has been raised from the dead; that is why these miraculous powers are at work in him."³ For Herod had seized John and bound him and put him in prison for

the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, ⁴ because John had been saying to him, "It is not lawful for you to have her."⁵ And though he wanted to put him to death, he feared the people, because they held him to be a prophet. ⁶ But when Herod's birthday came, the daughter of Herodias danced before the company and pleased Herod, ⁷ so that he promised with an oath to give her whatever she might ask. ⁸ Prompted by her mother, she said, "Give me the head of John the Baptist here on a platter."⁹ And the king was sorry, but because of his oaths and his guests he commanded it to be given. ¹⁰ He sent and had John beheaded in the prison, ¹¹ and his head was brought on a platter and given to the girl, and she brought it to her mother. ¹² And his disciples came and took the body and buried it, and they went and told Jesus. ¹³ Now when Jesus heard this, he withdrew from there in a boat to a desolate place by himself. But when the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot from the towns.

This is God's Word.

Let's Pray Together.

The historical account we've just read together reads like an ugly sin-filled soap-opera. We could title this section of **Matthew 14**, *Keeping up with the Herodians*.

Certainly the Bible is not boring. This account from **Matthew 14** paints a grotesque picture of unbelief which teaches the same lessons we learned last week from Nazareth's hometown unbelief. For just as the common

² C.f. the sermon entitled "Seeing Through Doubt" on Matthew 11:1-19 preached at New Castle Bible Church on April 26, 2020.

rural people from Nazareth refused to believe the obvious truth that Jesus was their Savior, so likewise King Herod himself also refused to believe.

Remember, when we talk about unbelief, we're not talking about doubt. Every Christian wrestles with real doubts throughout their life.² But unbelief like this represents the heart which is a hardened path³ – where Gospel seeds are outright rejected and not given a chance to penetrate the heart.

Unbelief is the opposite of saving faith. Unbelief holds obvious truth about the goodness and greatness of God under water like a beach ball... suppressing the truth in unrighteousness while continuing to live under the control of self-justified pride.⁴

And so Matthew's main point here is simply that,

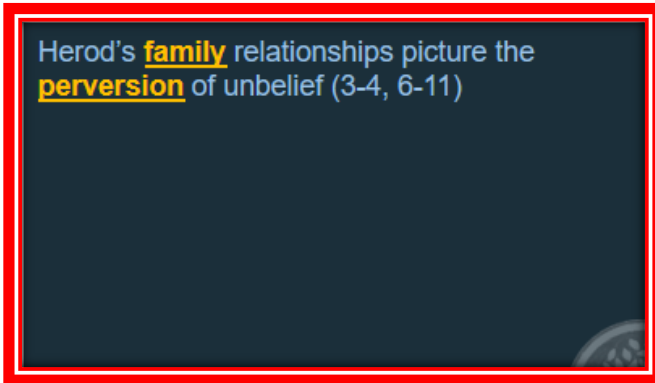


Herod's life pictures the destruction of unbelief. Herod is exhibit B. The Nazarenes were exhibit A. But Herod's life offers an extreme example of what leads a person to refuse to believe in Jesus.

³ Matthew 13:4, 19

⁴ Romans 1:18-32

So let's first consider how,



Herod's family relationships picture the perversion of unbelief.

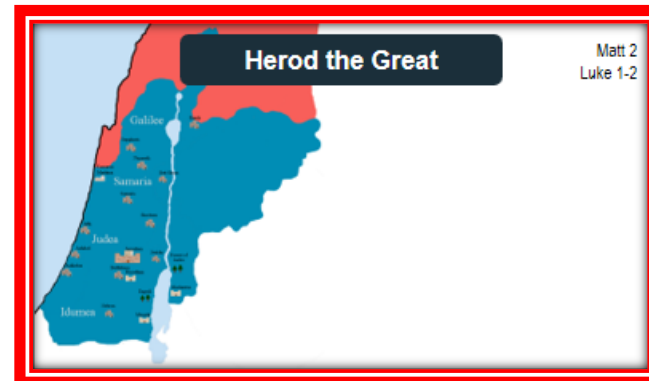
Verse 1 introduces us to Herod using the name, "*Herod the Tetrarch.*" "Herod" is a Greek title meaning "hero warrior," and is not a first name. Now we need a bit of a history lesson about the Herodian family, since there are actually 3 different "Herods" in the New Testament, and it's easy to get them confused.

Remember the New Testament Scriptures were all written during the height of the,



Roman Empire.⁵ And since the Roman Empire controlled such a large territory, the emperor in Rome would setup governors or puppet kings over smaller regions as his representative leadership.

So from 37 BC to 4 BC the region of Judea was ruled by,

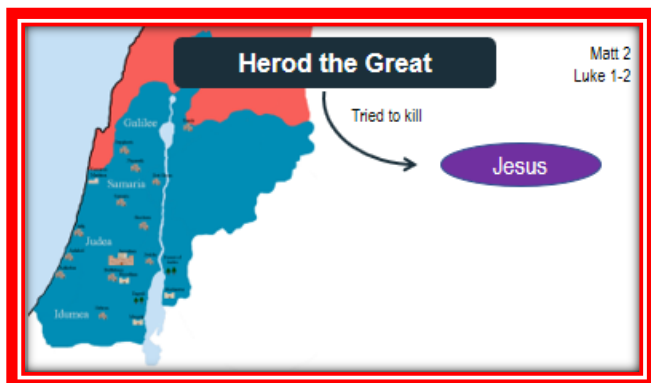


Herod the Great. Herod the Great was a descendent of Esau who was hated by the Jews.⁶ He was powerful and wicked, ruling the entire blue region on the map shown. He was known for major building projects, including the expansion of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, and the Masada and Herodion fortresses. In the New Testament,

⁵ Luke 2:1

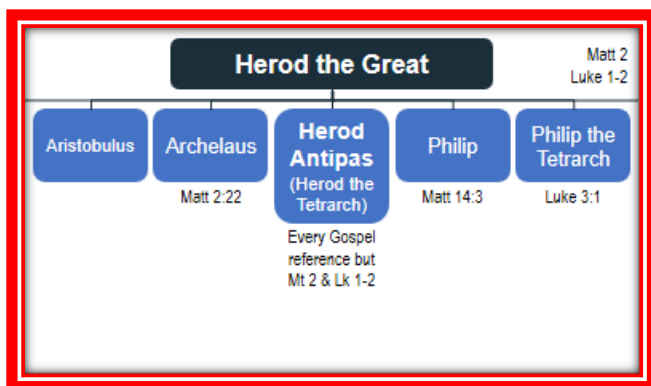
⁶ Genesis 25:23; Numbers 24:17; Obadiah 8-21

Herod the Great shows up in the birth narratives of Jesus⁷ as the king who,



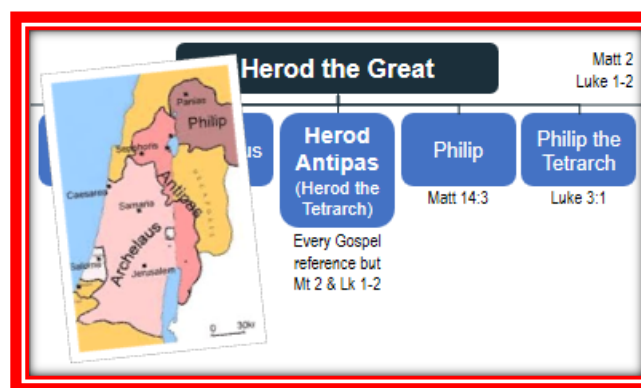
Tried to kill Jesus. It is Herod the Great who interacted with the wise men from the East,⁸ and then ordered all the infants in Bethlehem slaughtered to destroy the arrival of God's long-promised king.⁹

Now the family tree of Herod the Great is a great mess!



Herod had 10 different wives and many children. Today we're only going to meet 5 of his sons: Aristobulus, Archelaus, Herod Antipas, Philip, and Philip the Tetrarch.

And while four of these sons are mentioned in the New Testament, every time the Gospels refer to "Herod" outside of Jesus' birth accounts, they refer to Herod Antipas, or Herod the Tetrarch.



Tetrarch simply means a ruler of a fourth since Rome divided Herod the Great's territory into 4 parts after his death in 4 BC.

Salome, one of Herod the Great's sisters received a small coastal region. Archelaus inherited Judea and Samaria. Antipas reigned over Galilee and the region east of the Jordan river, and Philip the Tetrarch was given rule over the Gentile region northeast of the Sea of Galilee.

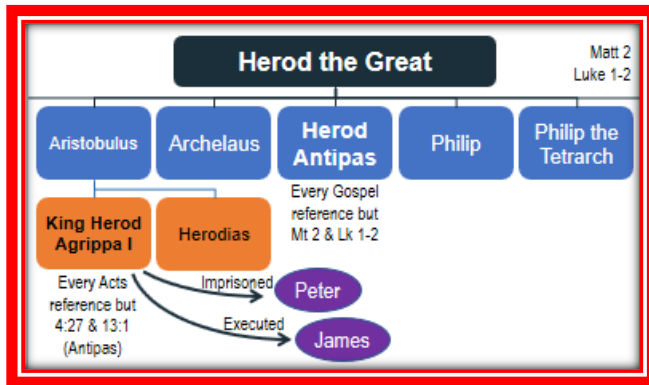
⁷ Luke 1:5

⁸ Matthew 2:1-8

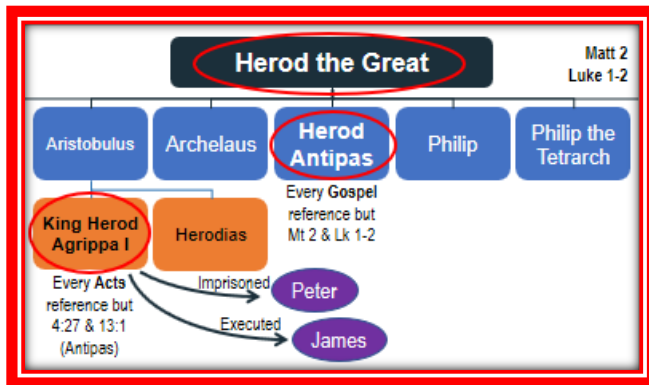
⁹ Matthew 2:16-18

So the Herod in **Matthew 14** is Herod Antipas, who ruled over the entire Galilee region during Jesus' time on earth.¹⁰

Now to properly understand our text this morning, we need to go another layer deeper into Herod's family tree.

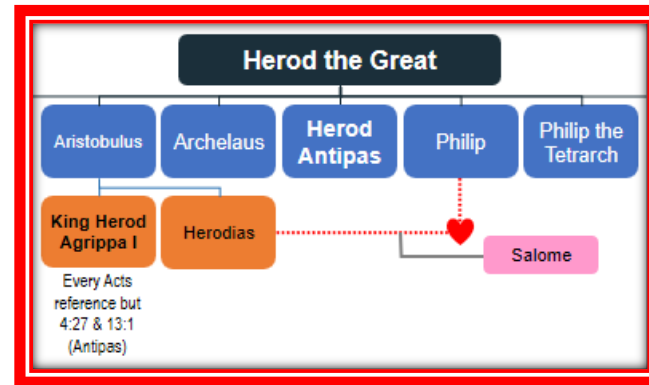


One of Aristobulus' children was King Herod Agrippa I. Except for two references to Herod Antipas, all the uses of the word "Herod" in the **Acts of the Apostles** refers to Herod Agrippa – the grandson of Herod the Great. This is the Herod who executed James and imprisoned Peter.

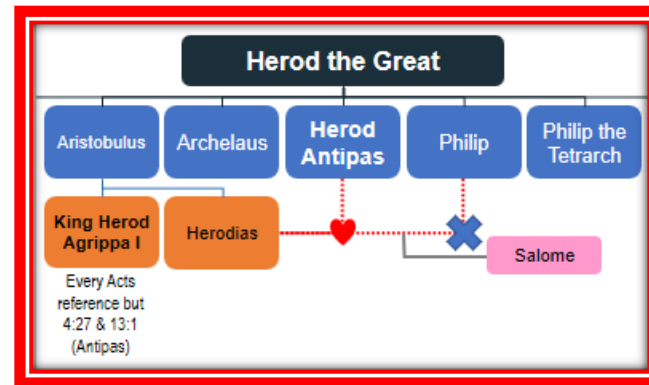


So there's three different Herod's referenced in the New Testament. In Jesus' birth narratives, it's Herod the Great. Throughout the Gospels, it's Herod Antipas. And in the book of Acts, it's Herod Agrippa the first. Got it?

Now brace yourself!

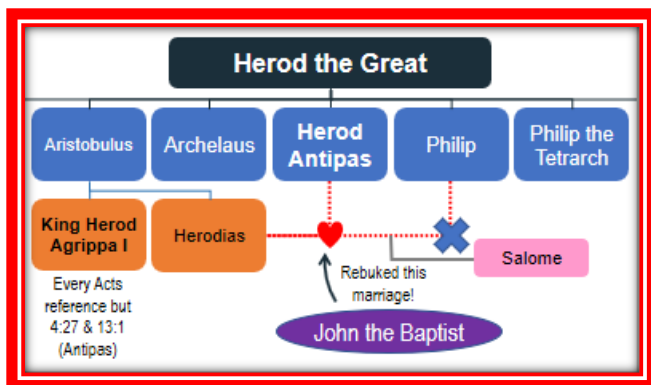


Because one of Aristobulus' daughters was named Herodias. She married her uncle Philip, and they had a daughter together named Salome. Herodias is probably one of the most wicked women in the Bible. At some point her and Herod Antipas



¹⁰ Herod Antipas ruled Galilee and Perea from AD 4-39.

Commit adultery together, divorce their spouses and marry each other. The soap opera is getting real now, isn't it? Betrayal, sex, divorce, incest, power plays – time doesn't permit filling in the details of this depraved family.



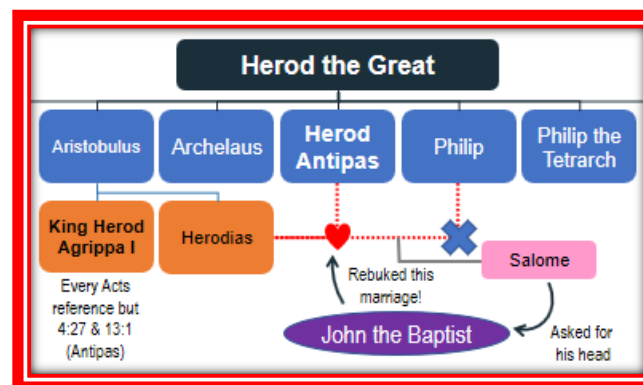
But it was this marriage between Herod Antipas and Herodias that John the Baptist kept speaking against in **verse 4** of our text. You see, John was a prophet – one who spoke God's message on God's behalf. And God's Law forbid adultery and sexual relations with close relatives.¹¹

And so how did Herod respond to John's repeated rebukes? Look at **verse 3**,

Herod seized John and bound him and put him in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife.

Herod and Herodias hated John's calls for repentance. John was respected by the large Jewish population throughout Galilee, and their hunger for political respect required that they silence all bad press.

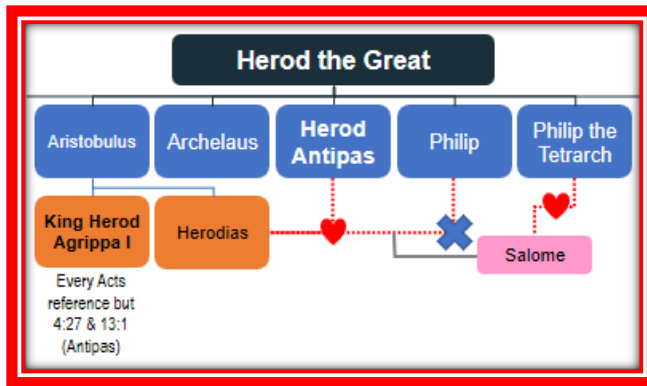
And so, as the flashback of **verses 3-12** recounts for us today,



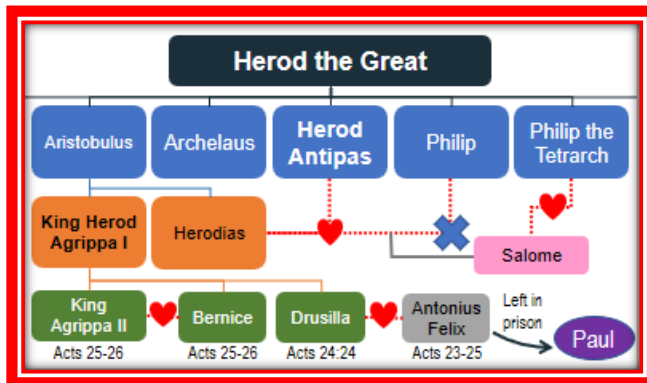
Herodias concocted a plan by which she used her young daughter Salome – likely only 12-14 years old at the time – to seduce Herod and take advantage of his drunken state to behead John the Baptist and silence the only righteous testimony in the fortress at that time.

Our stomachs should turn as we picture the ugly reality of **verse 11** ...as this teenage girl gingerly receives her desired prize and waltzes off to show her mother – careful to not get any stains on her clothing.

¹¹ Leviticus 18:14-18; 20:21; Deuteronomy 25:5



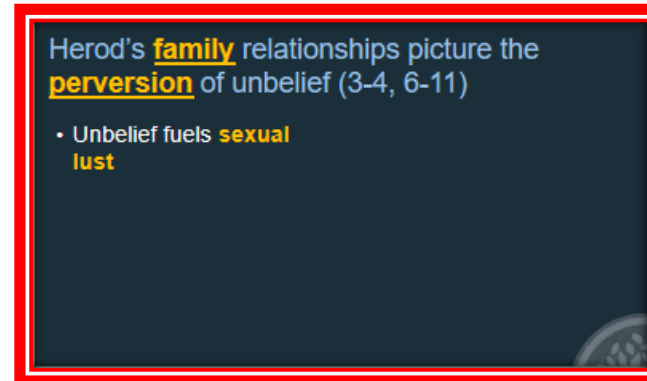
This Salome would eventually marry Philip the Tetrarch, but we need to dig down one more generation to see the full extent of the perversion of unbelief in this family.



Herod Agrippa had three children – King Agrippa the second, Bernice, and Drusilla. All three of these children, and Drusilla’s husband Felix, engage directly with Paul in the last chapters of **Acts**.

So when you read the name “Agrippa” in **Acts**, it’s always referring to King Agrippa the second, not one of the three Herods.

Now step back for a moment and take in this ugly picture of sinful perversion. The Herodian Dynasty illustrates well how,



Unbelief fuels sexual lust. Herod the Tetrarch and Herodias commit adultery and incest together. It’s reasonable to believe King Agrippa and his sister Bernice were involved sexually together as brother and sister. And Herod’s birthday party in **verse 6** was not at all innocent.¹²

Have you ever thought about the relationship between unbelief and sexual sin?¹³

God created your soul to be satisfied by knowing and treasuring Jesus. But when you reject Jesus in unbelief,

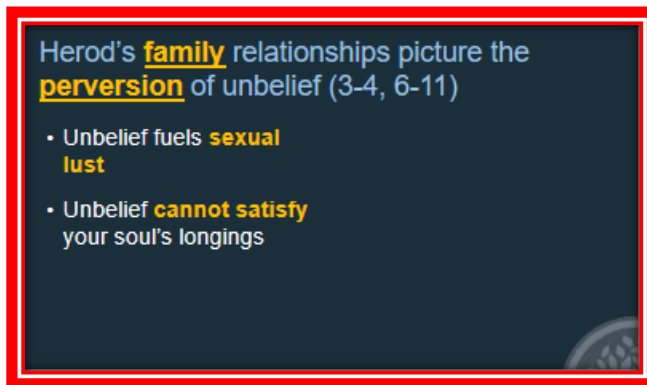
¹² The word “pleased” has sexually undertones in Matthew 14:6.

¹³ I.e. Romans 1:18-32 for the natural progression from unbelief to sexual sin. Whenever a soul refuses to acknowledge and honor God for who He

truly is, God gives them up to the defeated and unsatisfying pursuit of life among those earthly pleasures which can never truly satisfy a human soul that will exist for eternity. C.f. Ephesians 5:5 and 1 John 3:3

your soul seeks to satisfy its longings with the best earthly buzz available.

This is why our hearts crave such destructive pleasures as illicit sex and drugs and fast money. Because our souls were made to worship – and when you refuse to worship Jesus Christ – your soul will reach out for whatever earthly joy that promises to satisfy you.



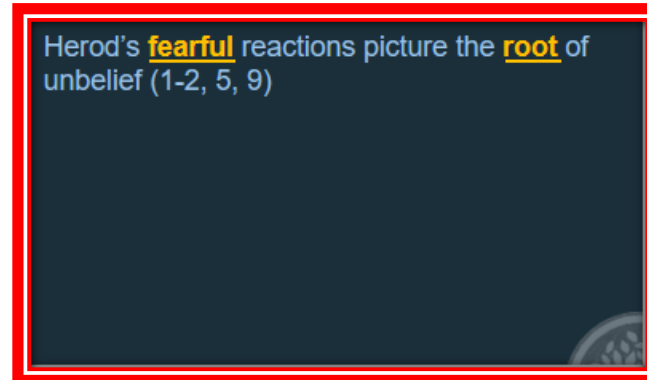
But **unbelief cannot satisfy your soul's longings**. The small pleasures of sex, money, and mind-altering substances can never satisfy a soul that was created to take in the glories of Jesus Christ Himself. The human soul is eternal, so no earthly pleasure is large enough to satisfy the longings of the human heart.

It doesn't matter if you are a common Nazarene, or a puppet king who has immediate access to anything his heart desires.

Whenever you refuse to believe that Jesus is your Savior, whenever you refuse to believe that only Jesus can fulfill the deepest desires of your soul – your life will cycle deeper and deeper into a pattern of discontented idolatry, lust, and despair.

Do you believe only Jesus can satisfy the longings of your soul?

Or do you yet believe that human praise will be the source of your greatest joy?



After all, Herod's **fearful** reactions picture the **root** of unbelief.

In **verse 1**, Herod hears about Jesus' growing fame, and he is immediately fearful. He obviously has a guilty conscience, because in **verse 2** all he can conclude in his superstitious beliefs about the afterlife is that the spirit of John the Baptist has returned for revenge.

So don't miss this. **Verses 3-13** flashback in time to help us understand why Herod is so scared of Jesus and His miraculous powers in **verses 1-2**.

You see, Herod saw Jesus as a threat to his kingdom. If Jesus got more glory, that was less glory for Herod Antipas.

Herod's **fearful** reactions picture the **root** of unbelief (1-2, 5, 9)

- Unbelief **competes against** God's glory (1)

Because like we learned last week, **Unbelief competes against God's glory**. We reject Jesus in unbelief because we are offended that God exists for God's sake, rather than for our sake.

Like Herod shows us in **verse 5**,

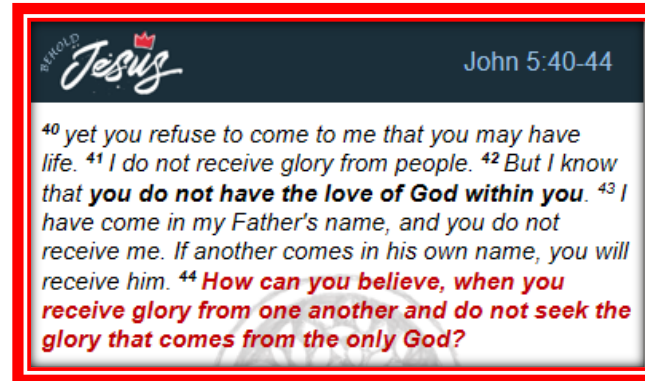
Herod's **fearful** reactions picture the **root** of unbelief (1-2, 5, 9)

- Unbelief **competes against** God's glory (1)
- Unbelief lives for **human approval** (5)

Unbelief lives for human approval. Unbelief fears people more than God. Unbelief cares most about what other people think about us.

The root of unbelief is the love for human praise. The reason people reject God is because they live for their own glory.

Just as we learned last week from **John 5**,



Verse 44,

How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God?

It is impossible for you to believe in Jesus and be saved while you are living for human approval. If you are ruled by the opinions of others, then you will not love God.

Herod was the typical puppet king. He lived for the popular vote. He was afraid of the people, he was afraid of his wife, he was afraid of John the Baptist, and he was afraid of Jesus. And **verse 9** illustrates well the fearful root of Herod's unbelief:

Herod's **fearful** reactions picture the **root** of unbelief (1-2, 5, 9)

- Unbelief **competes against** God's glory (1)
- Unbelief lives for **human approval** (5)
- Unbelief sins because of its **pride** (9)

Unbelief sins because of its pride.

Herod did what he knew was very wrong, simply because he didn't want to embarrass himself in front of his guests.

Pride, at its core, is just a craving lust for human approval. Either the approval of my own self-judgment, or most often, the approval of others who I'm trying to impress.

Pride stiffens its neck and refuses to believe that Jesus is God who is worthy of a lifetime of worship and witness.

Friends – God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.¹⁴ Do you see any root of unbelief in your own heart this morning?

If so, please cry out for God's mercy and cast yourself upon God's grace...

¹⁴ Psalm 138:6; Proverbs 3:34, 29:23; Matthew 23:12; James 4:6; 1 Peter
Page **12a** of 16

Herod's **final** rejection pictures the **end** of unbelief (10-11; Luke 23:6-12)

For Herod's **final** rejection pictures the **end** of unbelief (10; Luke 23:8-12)

Matthew 14 doesn't fill in a lot of details for us about how Herod interacted with Jesus. **Verses 1-2** simply reveal that Herod saw Jesus as a threat – perhaps even a judgment – against his own glory.

But in **Luke 23**, during Jesus' mock trial the morning of his crucifixion, **verse 8** insightfully summarizes Herod's posture towards Jesus,

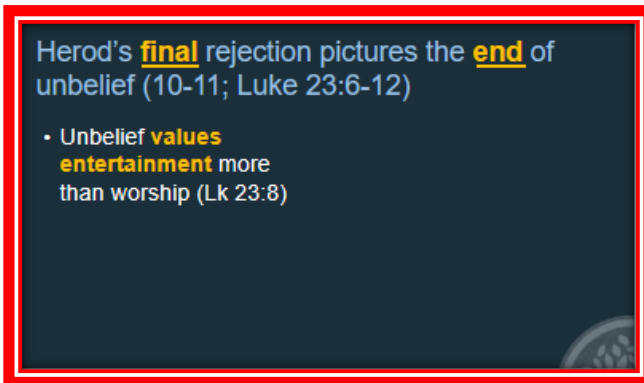
REHOLD **Jesus** Luke 23:8-11

⁸ When Herod saw Jesus, he was very glad, for he had long desired to see Him, because he had heard about Him, and **he was hoping to see some sign done by Him.** ⁹ So he questioned Him at some length, **but He made no answer.** ¹⁰ The chief priests and the scribes stood by, vehemently accusing Him. ¹¹ And Herod with his soldiers treated Him with contempt and mocked Him. Then, arraying Him in splendid clothing, he sent Him back to Pilate.

When Herod [Antipas] saw Jesus he was very glad, for he had long desired to see him, because he had heard about him, and he was hoping to see some sign done by him.

You see, Herod was interested in Jesus only for his own selfish entertainment. And that's why **verse 9** says Jesus refused to answer Herod.

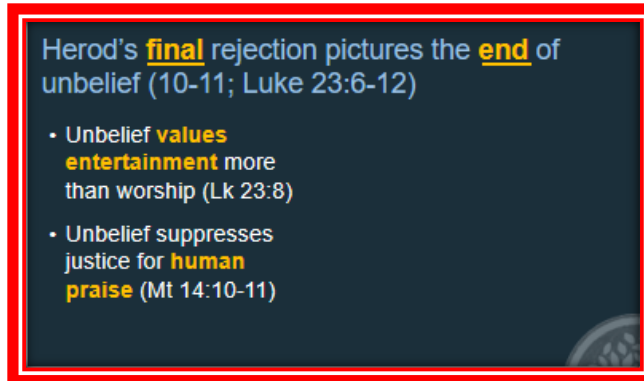
Here's the point:



Unbelief values entertainment more than worship, and therefore always refuses to submit to the Lordship of Jesus.

Saving faith will cost you your earthly reputation, but gain eternal life with God forever! But unbelief clings tightly to your earthly life and loses both the earthly and eternal joys that God created you to have through faith in Him.¹⁵

Herod's actions picture the outcome of unbelief since,



Unbelief suppresses justice for human praise. In **Matthew 14**, Herod beheads a righteous man simply to save his own face before his so-called friends.

In **Luke 23**, Herod chooses friendship with Pilate over friendship with God, and passively sends an innocent man to crucifixion.¹⁶

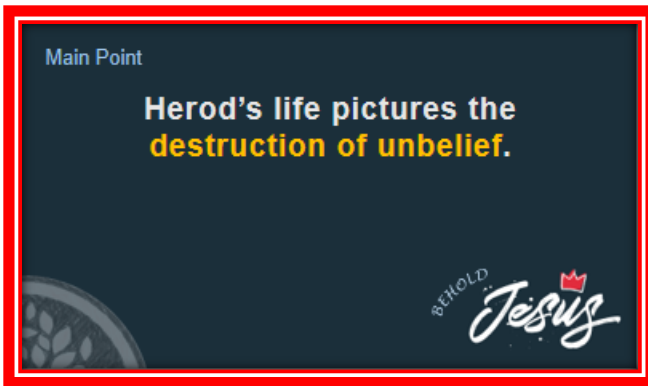
Unbelief always values human praise more than justice. Because remember, the biblical definition of justice is "God getting what God deserves." Biblical justice is far bigger than simply people getting what people deserve.

Justice is God getting what God deserves. And since unbelief rejects outright the rule of God, unbelief sacrifices whatever is righteous on the altar of whatever will give me the most votes.

Listen carefully: the end of unbelief is eternal death and separation from God.

¹⁵ Matthew 10:39, 16:25-26; Mark 8:35-36; Luke 9:24, 17:33; John 12:25
Page **13a** of 16

¹⁶ Luke 23:15



Herod's life pictures the destruction of unbelief.

Herod Antipas thought he had the world by the tail... he lived in great wealth, luxury, and pleasure. But no matter how hard he pursued human praise, his soul was always unsatisfied. And He and his family just got deeper and deeper in sin.

His nephew and brother-in-law, Herod Agrippa, eventually set him up in a political take-down and Herod Antipas and Herodias faded out of history in exile away from all the pomp and glory they gave their lives to build for themselves.

Don't follow Herod's destructive example.

Since God created your soul to know and treasure Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, there's only one way for your soul to find lasting satisfaction.



You must satisfy your life in the glory of King Jesus!

Sex, drugs, money, fame, adventure, travel, or human praise will never be able to satisfy the deepest desire of your soul. You were made to be satisfied in knowing Christ!!

Like Herod, pride tries to use Jesus for your own glory. But this is not saving faith.

Saving faith believes that I'm a sinner who does not deserve any kindness or favor from God. Saving faith believes that God is good, and merciful, and that He has taken my punishment and offers me eternal life all for *His* own glory. Saving faith loves God, and therefore saving faith finds its greatest satisfaction whatever glorifies God.

So whose glory are you living for? Where are you seeking your satisfaction?



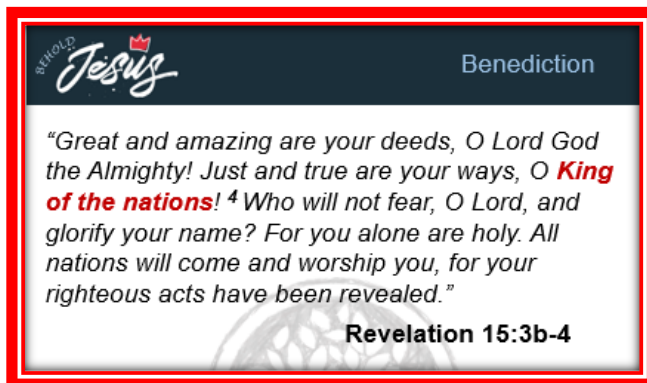
May God help us all to humble ourselves and boast only in knowing Jesus and being known by Him. For living in Christ is the truest delight possible for our souls.

Let's pray.

<<All I have is Christ – Chorus Only>>

Remember to take advantage of the online Downloads and links!

Let's pray our benediction together as we dismiss.



Great and amazing are your deeds, O Lord God the Almighty! Just and true are your ways, O King of the nations! Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship you, for your righteous acts have been revealed.
Revelation 15:3b-4

Recommended Resources on A King's Rejection:

- Genesis 25:23
- Proverbs 21:1; 29:25
- Obadiah 8-9, 18, 21
- Matthew 4:12; 5:12; 10:28; 23:31-35
- Mark 6:1-6; 17-29; 8:15
- Luke 3:1, 19-20; 9:7-9; 13:31-33; 23:6-12
- John 3:18-19; 5:40, 43-44; 6:65; 7:5, 27-29; 16:9
- Acts 4:27; 19:9
- Romans 1:18-32; 4:20; 10:21; 11:20
- 1 Corinthians 2:14; 4:3-4; 7:14-15
- 1 Timothy 1:13
- Titus 1:15
- Hebrews 3:12, 19; 11:6
- 1 Peter 2:8; 4:17

- <https://www.thatttheworldmayknow.com/in-herods-footsteps>
- <https://biblearchaeologyreport.com/2020/02/21/herod-antipas-an-archaeological-biography/>
- <https://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/people-cultures-in-the-bible/people-in-the-bible/herod-the-great-herodian-family-tree/>
- <https://faculty.wts.edu/lectures/the-anatomy-of-unbelief-lecture-2-part-1/>
- <https://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/biblical-sites-places/biblical-archaeology-sites/machaerus-beyond-the-beheading-of-john-the-baptist/>
- https://www.academia.edu/19649971/Herod_Antipas_The_Herod_Jesus_knew

- *Battling Unbelief*, John Piper
- *When People are Big and God is Small*, Ed Welch

Growing Deeper: Life Group Questions

1. Review Matthew 14:3-11. Compare and contrast the life of John the Baptist with the life of Herod the tetrarch. How is John's life an illustration of faith? How is Herod's life an illustration of unbelief?
2. Read Matthew 14:1-2, Mark 6:14-16, and Luke 9:7-9. How did Herod react to the spreading fame of Jesus? What motivated this reaction? Do you think Herod was threatened by Jesus? Why or why not?
3. Read Luke 23:8-12. What motivated Herod's questions to Jesus? Why didn't Jesus answer Herod's questions? Discuss the similarities between how Pilate and Herod each handled Jesus' trial before the cross.
4. Review Matthew 14:5 and 9. What was Herod most afraid of in these verses? How does the fear of man lay a trap for our souls (c.f. Proverbs 29:25)?
5. Read 1 Corinthians 4:3-4. Do you crave human praise? How much do you care about what others think about you? Discuss how your love for human approval hinders your ability to believe in Jesus.