

John the Baptist Beheaded

Matthew 14:1-8 and Mark 6:7-18

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The reports of Christ's ministry, augmented by that of His disciples (Luke 9:7), even reached into the palace of Herod Antipas. Mark called Him "King," which is what Herod wanted to be called; but in reality, godless Herod was only a tetrarch, the ruler of a fourth part of the nation. When Herod the Great died, the Romans divided his territory among his three sons; and Antipas was made tetrarch of Perea and Galilee.

Herod Antipas had married the daughter of King Aretas IV and then had divorced her so he could marry Herodias, the wife of his half brother, Herod Philip. It was a wicked alliance that was contrary to the Law of Moses (Lev. 18:16; 20:21), and the fearless John the Baptist had denounced the king for his sins. When Herod heard about the wonderful works of Jesus, he was sure that John the Baptist had come back from the dead to haunt him and condemn him! Herod's conscience was bothering him, but he was unwilling to face his sins honestly and repent.

At this point, Mark shifted into a flashback to explain how John the Baptist had been cruelly and unjustly arrested and slain. Even in this brief account, we sense the tension in the palace, for Herod feared John, privately listened to him preach, and was in a state of perplexity over what he should do. "Queen" Herodias, on the other hand, hated John, wanted to kill him, and patiently waited for the most convenient time.¹

John was on the right side of history; I want to be as well.

Jesus and John the Baptist grew up together, they were family. John the Baptist was the "forerunner for Jesus." He was preaching the Truth and Gospel, leading the way for Jesus. He was in essence leading the way and many thought He was Jesus. Yet, John would literally lose his life (head) for following Jesus. If anyone shouldn't be "persecuted" (in our thinking) it would be John, but John was killed because He was a Christ follower.

"If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. ¹⁹ If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. ²⁰ Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also. ²¹ But all these things they will do to you for My name's sake, because they do not know Him who sent Me. ²² If I had not come and spoken to them, they would have no sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin. ²³ He who hates Me hates My Father also. ²⁴ If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would have no sin; but now they have seen and also hated both Me and My Father. ²⁵ But this happened that the word might be fulfilled which is written in their law, 'They hated Me without a cause.' John 15:18-25

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.¹¹ Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. ¹² Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. Matthew 5:10-12

So why persecution? John 15:18-25 shows us clearly:

If the world (any non-believers) hated Jesus they will hate us. (18-20).

We are identified with Christ. "I am crucified with Christ, therefore I no longer live, Jesus Christ now lives in me."
Galatians 2:20

Jesus suffered thru trials, torture and crucifixion.

His suffering was physical, He was literally beat to the point of death and died a criminal's death.

His appearance was disfigured.

His disciples deserted and fled.

His suffering was spiritual (He became sin for us).

His suffering was mental (My God, my God why have you forsaken me?).

He was rejected by men.

So why persecution and why do we face tough times? We are followers of Jesus and Jesus faced it. If we are His followers, should we not expect the same thing?

Another reason is:

The world doesn't (didn't) know Jesus (vs. 21-22).

The world is spiritually ignorant and blind (v. 21).

¹ Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). [*The Bible exposition commentary*](#) (Vol. 1, pp. 130–131). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

The world acts like, well... the world. We should not be surprised Christ followers and the world are at odds in regards to "truth."

Our responsibility: *Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. Matthew 5:16*

We live in a fallen world. We are in it, but not of it. (John 16:3)

Why is it that we assume since we follow God and seek to obey Him that we think life should be easy and we should not have hard times or persecution?

Wrong theology (our own or what we have been taught).

Feel like we are "owed" something.

I think living in America we feel like we are blessed (and we are) and we should expect not to have persecution, but the Bible tells us the opposite.

We want a life without sin or it's affects.

"We want character without unyielding conviction; we want strong morality, but without the emotional burden of guilt or shame; we want virtue but without particular moral justifications that invariably offend; we want good without having to name evil; we want decency without the moral authority to insist upon it; we want moral community without any limitations to personal freedom. In short, we want what we cannot have on the terms that we want it."

~ James Davison Hunter

So what are we to do when we face hard times (of any kind) but especially persecution from the world?

Stand on the Promises of God (Scripture and we sing about it) list some as Believers.

Remember, Scripture tells us In the world we will have trouble but to take heart because Jesus has overcome the world. (John 16:33)

Let's look at some of the other promises of God.

Stand on the Truth of God and His Word.

How does the Holy Spirit encourage believers when they are experiencing the hatred and opposition of the world? It is primarily through the Word of God. For one thing, the Spirit reminds us that this opposition is clearly expressed by various writers in the Scriptures. In John 15:25, Jesus quoted Psalms 35:19 and 69:4. The Word assured Him that the hatred of the world was not because of anything He had done to deliberately incite such opposition. We today can turn to passages like Philippians 1:28–30; 2 Timothy 2:9–12; Hebrews 12:3–4; and 1 Peter 4:12ff. We also have the encouraging words of our Lord found in the Gospels. The Spirit also witnesses to us and through us during times of persecution (John 15:26–27). He reminds us that what we are experiencing is "the fellowship of His [Christ's] sufferings" (Phil. 3:10) and that it is a privilege to bear reproach for His name. (Read *carefully* 1 Peter 4:12–19.) Times of persecution have always been for the church times of proclamation and witness. We must be "ready always to give an answer" when unsaved people attack us (1 Peter 3:15). The Spirit witnesses to us so that we can witness to the world (Mark 13:11). Apart from the power of the Spirit of God, we cannot give a clear witness for Christ (Acts 1:8). There is no reason for the believer to stumble ("be offended," John 16:1) when the world stokes up the furnace of persecution. He should expect persecution, if only because his Lord told him it was coming. (Note especially John 13:19 and 14:29 where the Lord warned His disciples in advance.) Furthermore, they must not stumble when this persecution comes from religious people who actually think they are serving God. The word translated "service" in John 16:2 means "priestly service." This statement is certainly a description of Saul of Tarsus, who thought he was serving God by destroying the church (see Acts 7:57–8:3; 22:3–4; and 26:9–12).²

Stand on the fact that this isn't all there is.

This life is but a blip, eternity is waiting!

Give light to the world. Let our light shine!

Prayer Focus:

- Know trouble and persecution will happen.
- Trust in the Lord when it does.
- Ask God to help us shine the Light during our circumstances.
- Be reminded one day there will be NO MORE SIN!

² Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). [*The Bible exposition commentary*](#) (Vol. 1, pp. 359–361). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.