

The Death of John the Baptist

Matthew 14:1-21

by Don Falkos

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Herod Antipas, the ruler of Galilee, imprisoned John the Baptist to placate Herodias, the wife of his half-brother Philip. John had spoken out against their adulterous relationship. Herod wanted to kill John, but he was afraid to because the people believed John was a prophet.

The daughter of Herodias danced at Herod's birthday party. He and his guests were very pleased. Herod promised to give her anything she wanted. Her mother told her what to say. "I want the head of John the Baptist on a platter."

Herod was very upset, but unwilling to lose the esteem of his guests he issued the necessary orders. John was beheaded. His head was brought in on a platter and presented to the girl, who gave it to her mother. John's disciples came, took his body, and buried it. Then they went and told Jesus what had happened.

When Jesus heard the news, he set out in a boat for a place where he could be alone. But people figured out where he was going and by the time Jesus arrived a large crowd had already gathered. He had compassion on them and healed their sick.

Late in the afternoon the disciples said to Jesus, "Send these people away so they can go into the nearby towns and villages to buy food."

Jesus replied, "There's no need to send them away. You feed them."

They were stunned, "All we have is five loaves of bread and two fish."

Jesus had everyone sit down. He took the bread and fish and gave thanks to God. The food was distributed among the people, all five thousand of whom ate their fill. Afterwards the disciples picked up twelve baskets of leftovers.

When Herod heard about everything Jesus was doing, he thought, "This must be John the Baptist come back from the dead. That's why he can work miracles."