

(John the Baptist Comes to Town) - Part 3 - Sermon That Cost a Preacher His Head

by Rolfe Barnard

The sermon emphasizes the importance of repentance, highlighting its role as the first step towards salvation and a right relationship with God.

Duration: 24:29

Scripture: Isaiah 32:17, Matthew 3:2, Matthew 14:11, Mark 6:14, John 3:3, John 6:27, Acts 17:30

Topics: "John The Baptist"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the ministry of John the Baptist and the sermon that ultimately cost him his head. The sermon was about holiness, righteousness, and God's holy law. John the Baptist fearlessly confronted King Herod and his ungodly wife about their unlawful relationship, which ultimately led to his execution. The preacher emphasizes the importance of repentance and surrendering to the claims of Christ in order to receive salvation and experience true peace and joy.

Transcript

We come now with the third in the series of four messages on the general title, John the Baptist Come to Town, or the ministry of the forerunner of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the type of the work of the Holy Spirit in preparing men's hearts to bow down to the demands and claims of Christ Jesus and receive him as Lord and Master and Savior of their lives and of their souls. We've been speaking to you over the past two Lord's Days on the necessity of repentance and how John the Baptist was faithful to keep sinners' feet to the fire and tell them that God demands and will settle for nothing less than an all-out, unconditional surrender to the claims of Christ and that only those who bow to the scepter of King Jesus may know him in the pardon of their sins and what we call salvation. Now with your Bible open for the third message, and I remind you that these messages are being printed and placed in a booklet form, and at the close of the broadcast we'll give you our mailing address and tell you where you may obtain a copy of these four messages on the ministry of John the Baptist merely for the asking.

With your Bible open to the gospel according to Mark 6, I want to speak again along the line of the ministry of John the Baptist, and if I had a subject for the message today, it would be the sermon that cost a preacher his head. In Mark 6, verse 14, we read, And King Herod heard of him, that's the Lord Jesus, for his name was spread abroad. And the king said that John the Baptist was risen from the dead, and therefore mighty works do show forth themselves in him.

Others said, No, this is Elijah. And others said that it's a prophet, or as one of the prophets said, trying to make some disposition of the person called Jesus. But when Herod the king heard thereof, he said, I know who this fellow is, he's John, whom I beheaded, and he's risen from the dead.

For Herod himself had sent forth and laid hold upon John, and bound him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife, for he'd married her. For John had said unto Herod, see, he's preaching a sermon outside Jerusalem, and Herod attended the service, and John looked him in the face and said, Herod, it's not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife. Therefore Herodias, that's Herod's wife, had a quarrel against him, John the Baptist, and would have killed him, but she could not.

For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man, and on the whole, and observed him. And when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly. Old Herod knew that John was bringing truth, and he's afraid of him, and he respected him, and he did a lot of things that John said must be done, and he heard him gladly.

And when a convenient day was come, that Herod on his birthday made a supper to his lords, high captains, and chief estates of Galilee. And when the daughter of the said Herodias came in and danced and pleased Herod and them that sat with him, the king said unto the damsel, Ask of me whatsoever thou wilt, and I'll give it thee. And he sware unto her, Whatsoever thou shalt ask of me, I'll give it thee unto the half of my kingdom.

And she went forth and said unto her mother, What shall I ask? And she said, The head of John the Baptist. And she came in straightway with haste unto the king, and I said, I will that thou give me by and by in a charge of the head of John the Baptist. And the king was exceeding sorry, yet for his oath's sake, and for thy sakes would sat with him, he would not reject her.

And immediately the king sent an executioner, and commanded his head to be brought. And he went and beheaded him in the prison, and brought his head in a charge, and gave it to the damsel. And the damsel gave it to her mother, and when the disciples heard of it, they came and took up his corpse, and laid it in a tomb.

My friends, here's a sermon, faithful, that cost a man his head. It's a sermon on holiness. It's a sermon on righteousness.

It's a sermon on God's holy law. It's a sermon on the requirements of a holy God. It's a sermon on the character of God.

And here's this mouthpiece, this voice of a holy God, a man by the name of John the Baptist, facing the king of Judea with his ungodly wife, and ungodly daughter, and all the courtiers that stand about the court. And when this old king hears from God, through the lips of God's preacher and God's prophet, that it's not lawful for thee to have your brother's wife, that sermon, that faithfulness, that truth, costs John the Baptist his head. But that man Herod, it cost him his eternity-bound soul.

You know, my friends, from the beginning of John the Baptist's ministry throughout the lids of the New Testament, repentance is the watchword of the hour. And every prophet and the Lord Jesus Christ Himself in his prophetic ministry down through John, the seer who wrote the last book of the Bible, rings the changes on the truth that God is a holy God, that his demands have not been lightened, and that men are still called upon to repent toward God and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Immediately we open the Word

of God, whether in the Old Testament or in the New, and we find the subject that's paramount is repentance.

In the Old Testament, the old-time prophets were all the time forever and eternally calling on the people to give up their sinful ways and to live a righteous life. When John the Baptist hit the deck to prepare the people's heart to receive Jesus Christ, he immediately announced, Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. The first sermon the Lord Jesus ever preached as a prophet, he demanded repentance.

The apostle Paul is the author, as the Holy Spirit gave emergence of that eternal command, as recorded in Acts 17 and 30, and the times of this ignorance God overlooked. But in Old Abbey now, since the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, now is all men to repent. It's God's command, and back of God's command is God, the character of God and the requirements of God.

In the Bible, my friends, the word repentance, the act repentance, the duty repentance, the command repentance, the gift of repentance is the first step. I don't like that term, first step, but I don't know how to put it any better. There's no use for us to deny that God Almighty demands repentance.

He commands repentance, the duty of all men, Paul says, now since Christ has come, God don't overlook anything now, and ignorance is no excuse. The first duty of men and women is to repent. You know, my friends, in our zeal, we've lowered God's standards.

We've widened the door of the professing church, but we've not been able to widen God's door to glory. Those doors that mark the difference between hell and heaven and bliss and torment in eternity cannot be widened, they cannot be changed. The doorkeeper is God Almighty himself.

These doors to glory were fixed forever and eternity in the eternal counsels of Almighty God, and the price of that fixing was wrought out in the agonizing blood of the Lord Jesus Christ at a place called Calvary. I know that I'm preaching in a day now when we've made it too easy, we've made it far too easy, and today God pitted the mark to many. It costs nothing to come into our churches, it costs nothing to go out.

We give up nothing when we come in, and we leave nothing behind. When we go out, a generation or two ago, I remember even when I first started to preach nearly 33 years ago, a generation ago, it meant something to stack arms, to throw down your shotgun, to repent, to surrender, to come into the presence of the living Christ in such a way as to be saved. In that day and time, this Christian walk, this Christian way was a pilgrimage, being men and women walking in intimate territory, walking the tight rope and seeking the will of God.

In those days, this business of being a Christian was a warfare, constantly at war with our old flesh within us, with the devil tempting us and with the atmosphere of the world around us. In those days, this business of walking with Christ was an eternal conflict, it was an agonizing struggle. In those days, coming to Christ meant an honest attempt to do eternally the will of a sovereign God.

In those days, coming to Christ and what we call repentance meant it necessary that cutting off of the arm or plucking out of the eye. In the word of God, we are told about a cross and about taking it up and about denying self. In those days, coming to Christ and repentance meant being willing to be a fool for Christ's sake.

In those days, coming to Christ and repentance meant walking alone if necessary. It meant the willingness to be hated for his sake. Now, God help us, it's more or less a picnic, it's a song show, it's a mockery.

May God open our eyes. Repentance holds the field until our Lord Jesus Christ recalls it. And he hadn't done that up till now, and so I preach it John the Baptist preached it, it cost him his head.

And I preach it, and failure to obey it will cost you your soul. I'm dead certain that the mess we are in religiously and spiritually now, the lovesick so-called church people, the sickly sentimental crop of so-called believers who are enthusiastic about a fair or a frolic, but they are conspicuously absent from a prayer meeting, I'm sure that that's due to the fact that our churches are full of people who were not born right. Somehow or another they got into our professing churches without ever having come face to face with the holy demands of a holy God, and being brought in the face of those demands to the place of throwing up all hands of self-effort and self-confidence, and turning oneself over lock, stock, and barrel to the sovereign Christ.

Somehow or another they missed the main business. Somehow or another they got in what we call the church without turning in abhorrence and in utter, utter conviction against it, without turning from their sin to obedience to God. And of course, their lives fail.

And if we dodge this step, we miss out on salvation. In the days of the apostle Paul, it is Jesus as Lord or Caesar as Lord, and it's that way now. No man can serve two masters, says my Lord, and you're either in enemy territory, friendly with God's enemies, giving comfort to those who would tear God off his throne, wipe the memory of the shed blood of Jesus Christ off the face of the earth if they could, or you're either in the camp of those who gladly surrendered to the ruling reign of Christ and own his death as your death, and his life as your life, and his resurrection as your resurrection, and his reign as your reign.

You own him, and you're awfully glad you do. I tell you, my Lord Jesus Christ never has made it easy. He did not preach only belief.

He preached righteousness and then peace. He never offered to give peace to sinners while they wave the red flag of their open rebellion against the claims of Christ and the rule of Christ. My friends, time and time and time again in the Bible, that's clearly brought out.

He is a rich young ruler, my soul. If he'd have come to us, we'd have voted him in, wouldn't we? But he lacked one thing. He lacked one thing.

He's like old Herod. He believed. He did this, and he heard John Herod did gladly, and he did many things.

He quit this, and he quit that, and he quit the other, and he quit the other. But when John put his finger on the sore spot, his illegal both godhood and manhood relationship to his brother Philip's wife, he killed Philip and taken Philip's wife now to be his consort. And John said, You're breaking God's law.

You're breaking God's law. Oh, old Herod, he's willing to do this and willing not to do that. But when it came to the sore spot in his life and the one place where he is telling God to go to hell and proving that he wasn't willing to abide by the strict law of holy God, when that thing faced him, he said, I got to do something.

And when the pressure was brought to bear on him, instead of turning from his sins to God, he cut the head of John the Baptist off, and they brought it into him on a charger. Oh, my soul, it's for Pentecostal hell. And I tell you now, my Lord never did lower the standards.

He tells Nicodemus a nice, respectable man, a member of the greatest religious group the world at that time had ever seen. They were strict and in many respects honorable and aboveboard. But he tells old Nicodemus that a miracle's got to take place in his life or in his heart.

He's got to be what the scriptures call born anew, born from above. Oh, my Lord, Jesus Christ says, let righteousness be established as the dominant principle of your life, and then peace will be yours. Let surrender be your action and your attitude, and then joy will be your portion.

But no righteousness, no peace, no surrender, no joy. My Lord Jesus Christ will tell men to labor not for the meat that perishes, but labor for the meat that springs up into eternal life. He'll tell men to agonize, stand in the straight gate, and tell them that few will be able to get in there.

My Lord will not, my Lord cannot and still be God, save any human being in time or in eternity, apart from that human being as an act of himself, bringing all of his idols, stacking his arms, making a once for all to be recommitted and done all over again day after day, committal to the Lord Jesus Christ. What is repentance? What is it John the Baptist is demanding? Well, he told old Herod, you'll just have to turn from this evil way. What is it? Well, repentance is conviction, and yet it's not conviction.

No man ever has been able to repent apart from deeply feeling the sense of his utter guilt. That's conviction. And yet, repentance is more than conviction.

Conviction is something like this. Conviction is, I think, here's an illustration. For instance, it's one thing to be called at five o'clock in the morning by the hotel clerk or by the alarm clerk, but it's another thing to get up.

You see, conviction's to be called, another thing's to heed the call. It's one thing to be awake, that's conviction. It's another thing to arise, that's repentance.

You see, you do this, that's conviction. You do it, that's repentance. Light, that's conviction.

Life is the fruit of repentance. I know what's right. I'll do it if it kills me.

That's repentance. My sinner friend, God Almighty, for some of you has taken the trouble to wake you up to your perilous condition before Him. It was dark.

And He, God, struck a light and said to you, this is the path I want you to walk in. And you were awakened, that's conviction. You were convicted.

Some of you were alarmed. Some of you have been concerned. Your conscience was aroused.

You knew you were wrong and that you were under God's judgment. You were moved about it, about your need. You lifted your hand and said, pray for me.

You sought somebody out and asked him to help you. You were moved. And had you acted, you would have become a Christian.

But you didn't. You resisted. You dallied.

Or maybe you fought it. You said no. And some of you have been in this state for years until the alarm clock sounds mighty feeble now and the light of your conscience is mighty dim.

Once you tremble, now you sleep well at night. Repentance is conviction, but it's more than conviction. Repentance is sorrow for sin, but it's more than sorrow for sin.

This young lawyer who came to the Lord Jesus Christ was sorry, but he wasn't sorry enough to repent. He wept, but he went away wiping the tears from his eyes without Christ. My dear unsaved friend, tears do not count if your heart is in rebellion.

More than tears are needed. A great once for all, Lord, I surrender, is needed. Repentance is not emotion or excitement, but repentance includes it.

No man has ever been able to repent who did not get terribly excited in this very seat of the affections of his soul about the heinousness of his sin and the desperateness of his relation or lack of it to Almighty God. What is repentance? Well, it's the one great deliberative and deliberate act of the soul, the whole man, in obedience to the call of God. It's a turning from, too.

It's a putting your hand on your sin and pulling it out. That's what repentance is. Of course, John the Baptist is here to preach repentance to Herod.

And I've come now to the close of this third message on repentance. Have you repented? Have you been able, as you sought a new heart, as you put yourself in the hands of a sovereign God, have you been able to abhor yourself, your old nature, and your sinful ways, and turn utterly, renouncing all hope in self, put your confidence and your trust and your surrender in the Lord Jesus Christ? I hope you have. Next Lord's Day we're going to bring the last message on the subject of John the Baptist.

I hope you'll be listening. Now, our Father, we've come again to the close of another message on repentance. How we wish we knew how to stand before this microphone and just pluck at the heart strings and the consciences and the wills of all who've heard.

And in the name of a sovereign God, demand that right here, now, not tomorrow, not five minutes from now, but right now, men and women shall once and for all abandon a life lived against the will of God, cast themselves upon his goodness and mercy. Lord, speak to hearts and radio land today. We bring our Father first our own needs now.

How I need to power the Holy Spirit in meetings and care of the churches. I pray that you'll be pleased to anoint me from time to time. And then I bring afresh the needs of these broadcasts.

You know about them. You know how much it costs. And this month we are spending extra money getting these messages in print.

We've tried to do it believing you'll enable us to pay for it. You know how we have to pay for the do a month in advance because we have nobody backing us and no reserve. And I thank you, Lord, that you're going to answer.

You want to stay on these stations. I know you're going to put it on the people's hearts, those who ought to. We know that everybody in radio land ought not to help support this ministry.

There's so many good things that are of the Lord to be supported, but some of them may be off and we bring them to you. And now our Father speak to hearts in Christ's name and for his sake. Amen.

You've been listening to the third message on John the Baptist come to town.

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