

"Ask me for whatever you wish, and I will give it.... "
"The head of John the baptizer."

Sanhedrin. Herod Antipas inherited his father's kingdom in 4 BC. Antipas ruled his territory as a client state of the Roman Empire. He was responsible for building projects at various cities and most importantly for the construction of his capital, Tiberias, on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee. Named in honor of his patron, the Emperor Tiberius, the city later became a center of rabbinic learning.

Antipas divorced his first wife, Phasaelis, the daughter of King Aretas IV Philopatris of Nabatea, ¹ in favor of Herodias, who had formerly been married to his own half-brother, Herod Boethus, father to Salome, the storied child dancer in today's Gospel. It was John the Baptist's condemnation of this incestuous arrangement that led Antipas to have him arrested; John was subsequently put to death.

The Gospel of Luke records that when Jesus was brought before Pontius Pilate for trial, Pilate handed him over to Antipas, in whose territory Jesus had been active. Antipas however sent him back to Pilate. The legal basis for these events and the very historicity of Antipas' involvement in the trial, have been the subject of unresolved scholarly debate.

Besides provoking his conflict with the Baptist, the tetrarch's divorce added a personal grievance to previous territorial border disputes with his former father-in-law, King Aretas. The result was a war that proved disastrous for Antipas; a Roman counter-offensive was ordered by Emperor Tiberius, but abandoned upon that emperor's death in 37 AD. In 39 AD Antipas was accused by his nephew Agrippa I of conspiracy against the new Roman emperor Caligula. Antipas was sent into exile in Gaul. Accompanied there by Herodias, he died at an unknown date.

Please prepare Mark 6:30-34; 53-56 for next Sunday.

¹ Aretas appears again in Scripture. Saint Paul recorded in Second Corinthians, 11:32: *In Damascus, the governor under King Aretas set a guard on the city of Damascus in order to seize me,*

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Head of Saint John the Baptist

Jean-Baptiste Chatigny
French, Lyon, 1869
Bronze

Diameter: 16 15/16 x D: 5 in. Getty Center, Los Angeles

**The severed head of Saint John the Baptist,
executed at the request of Salome, King Herod's**

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stepdaughter, rests on a charger. According to the Bible, Salome's request was prompted by her mother, Herodias, who wanted revenge on the prophet who had condemned her incestuous marriage to Herod. In the Middle Ages images of Saint John's head on a charger were believed to have therapeutic and curative powers.

Jean-Baptiste Chatigny's bronze relief plays down the gruesome aspects of the story, emphasizing John's surrender instead of his decapitation. John's closed eyes and open mouth make him seem all-too-human, emphasizing the pathos and tragedy of his death.

Today's Gospel: Saint Mark 6:14-29

✕ King Herod heard of it, for Jesus' name had become known. Some were saying, "John the baptizer has been raised from the dead; and for this reason these powers are at work in him." But others said, "It is Elijah." And others said, "It is a prophet, like one of the prophets of old." But when Herod heard of it, he said, "John, whom I beheaded, has been raised." For Herod himself had sent men who arrested John, bound him, and put him in prison on account of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, because Herod had married her. For John had been telling Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife." And Herodias had a grudge against him, and wanted to kill him. But she could not, for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and he protected him. When he heard him, he was greatly perplexed; and yet he liked to listen to him. But an opportunity came when Herod on his birthday gave a banquet for his courtiers and officers and for the leaders of Galilee. When his daughter Herodias came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his guests; and the king said to the girl, "Ask me for whatever you wish, and I will give it." And he solemnly swore to her, "Whatever you ask me, I will give you, even half of my kingdom." She went out and said to her mother, "What should I ask for?" She replied, "The head of John the baptizer." Immediately she rushed back to the king and requested, "I want you to give me at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter." The king was deeply grieved; yet out of regard for his oaths and for the guests, he did not want to refuse her. Immediately the king sent a soldier of the guard

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with orders to bring John's head. He went and beheaded him in the prison, brought his head on a platter, and gave it to the girl. Then the girl gave it to her mother. When his disciples heard about it, they came and took his body, and laid it in a tomb. [© NRSV]

The History of King Herod Antipas

Herod Antipas (short for Antipatros) (born before 20 BC – died after 39 AD) was a first century ruler of Galilee and Perea, who bore the title of tetrarch ("ruler of a quarter"). He is best known today for his role in the events that led to the executions of John the Baptist and Jesus of Nazareth as recorded in the New Testament.

Coin Of Herod Antipas

Obverse: JUDAEA, Herodians. Herod Antipas. 4 BC-39 AD 18mm (4.98 g). Dated year 34 (30 AD). Palm branch; L LD (date) across fields

Reverse:

Legend in two lines within wreath.



Herod Antipas' father, also named Herod, (called *The Great*) was born around 74 BC. He was the second son of Antipater the Idumaeen, a high-ranked official. The family had been forcibly converted to a nominal observance of Judaism. Antipater appointed Herod governor of Galilee at 25. At the same time his older brother, Phasaël was named governor of Jerusalem. Herod enjoyed the backing of Rome but his excessive brutality was condemned by the