



**BELIEVERS CHAPEL**

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Matthew 14:1-12

“Herod - the Horror of Christ’s Silence”

TRANSCRIPT

[AUDIO BEGINS]...Matthew chapter 14, verses 1 through 12,

“At that time Herod the tetrarch heard of the fame of Jesus, and said unto his servants, This is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead; and therefore mighty works do show forth themselves in him, (now then, with that as a kind of introduction Matthew now tells us why Herod thought that Jesus was John the Baptist. And so he takes us back in time a little bit to give us the background for Herod’s fears about Jesus.) For, (the 3rd verse begins with,) Herod had laid hold on John, and bound him, and put him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife. For John said unto him, It is not lawful for thee to have her. And when he would have put him to death, he feared the multitude, because they counted him as a prophet, (Mark tells us that Herodias has a quarrel with him and she wanted to put him to death. But she wasn’t able because Herod feared the crowd though he would have liked to have gotten rid of John, in one sense he was afraid to put him to death at that time. Verse 6,) But when Herod's birthday, (that is, the birthday of his accession to the throw,) was kept, the daughter of Herodias danced before them, and pleased Herod. Whereupon he promised with an oath to give her whatsoever she would ask. And she, being before instructed of her mother, said, Give me here John

Baptist's head in a charger. And the king was sorry: nevertheless for the oath's sake, and them which sat with him at meat, he commanded it to be given her. And he sent, and beheaded John in the prison. And his head was brought in a charger, and given to the damsel: and she brought it to her mother. And his disciples came, and took up the body, and buried it, and went and told Jesus.”

Now let's turn to the Gospel of Luke chapter 13. This incident occurs a little bit later in the story of Herod. Verse 31 through verse 33, Luke chapter 13,

“The same day there came certain of the Pharisees, saying unto him, Get thee out, and depart hence: for Herod will kill thee. And he said unto them, Go ye, and tell that fox, Behold, I cast out demons, (or devils,) and I do cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be perfected. Nevertheless I must walk today, and tomorrow, and the day following: for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem.”

Now turn on to the last scene in the Gospel of Luke in which Herod figures the 23rd chapter of the gospel, and we read verses 6 through 12. Luke chapter 23, verses 6 through 12, it is the civil trial of Jesus, he has appeared before Herod. Somehow or other word has come to Herod that Jesus is a Galilean, remembering that Herod is in the city and desiring to get Jesus off of his hands he sends him to Herod, verse 6,

“When Pilate heard of Galilee, he asked whether the man were a Galilaean. And as soon as he knew that he belonged unto Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him to Herod, who himself also was at Jerusalem at that time. And when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceeding glad, (do not be fooled, this does not mean that he was anxious to believe in Christ, as you shall see,) for he was desirous to see him of a long season, because he had heard many things of him; and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by him. Then he

questioned with him in many words; but he, (Jesus,) answered him nothing. And the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused him. And Herod with his men of war set him at nought, and mocked him, and arrayed him in a gorgeous robe, and sent him again to Pilate. And the same day Pilate and Herod were made friends together: for before they were at enmity between themselves.”

May God bless this reading from his inspired word. Let’s bow together in prayer.

[Prayer] Our gracious God and heavenly Father we are so grateful for our Lord and savior Jesus Christ and that we are able to meet in the one name that is above every name. We thank Thee Lord that we do not meet in the names of others but in his name. And we rejoice in the fact that the name Jehovah, the Lord God of Israel, King and Messiah, is the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. And we thank Thee that as we meet in his name we have access to Thee, the Father of spirits. And we rejoice in this access which Thou hast made possible and which he has made possible as a result of that agreement to consummate the redemption of man from eternity past.

We thank Thee that in time Jesus Christ suffered in the land of Palestine, outside the gates of the city of Jerusalem according to the prophecies of the Old Testament. And we thank Thee as a result of that finished work, of full and free redemption, is now being preached in the power of the third member of the blessed trinity, the Holy Spirit of God. And we thank Thee for the fruit which has come for the church of Jesus Christ, composed of those who have genuinely believed in him, whom to know his life eternal.

We thank Thee that we are able to gather and listen to the word and hear the testimonies of the New Testament writers concerning him. We thank Thee, Lord, for each one present, for the hopes and ambitions, for the problems and for the perplexities that exist in the hearts of all of us. We thank Thee, too, Lord that Thou hast ordained to lift us up and to enable us by the Holy Spirit to walk in works which Thou hast afore prepared

that we should walk in them. And Lord, as a group of believers in the Lord Jesus we pray that we may realize the will of God for us. We know that this is the happy, the joyful, the secure, and the meaningful place of human existence. And so if there should be someone in this auditorium today who at this very moment in their hearts knows that they do not know him, may the spirit of God take of the things of Christ and show them unto them. And may they put their trust in him and walk out of this auditorium today with the assurance of life everlasting.

Lord, for some perhaps who have heard the gospel month after month, year after year, perhaps many years but have never really responded to Jesus Christ, may the message today be an admonition that turns them from the way that leads to certain death. May the Spirit of God touch the hearts of those who are on the way to eternal perdition. And may, Lord, they be saved from that path by the power of God. We commit ourselves to Thee, we thank Thee for this congregation of people for the interest shown in the word of God, for the hopes as an assembly of God’s people, that Thou mayest use us in this community to glorify Jesus Christ. And if it should please Thee, Lord, we pray that Thy hand may come down upon us in great power and individually we may witness for our Lord Jesus Christ and serve him in such a way that the assembly of God may be blessed and built upon the foundation of Christ and his light seen in this community. This we ask in his name and for his sake. Amen.

[Message] The subject for this morning as we continue our series of studies in prominent figures in the drama of Golgotha is Herod Antipas, or the Horror of Christ’s Silence.

A strange and almost inexorable fate seems to bring the chief actors in the drama of Golgotha before the king, Messiah Jesus, to receive his judgment in this last scene of all in the gospels. It’s rather strange, it’s almost as if some master of literature had worked out this amazing story so that the men who had been in the life of our Lord Jesus the

chief characters all happen to be in Jerusalem at the time of his death and pass before the Lord Jesus and receive the judgment that comes from him.

Oh it’s true, the Lord Jesus appears before the judges and before the kings but in reality the judges and the kings and the high priests appear before him. The statement is made in the 23rd chapter in the Gospel of Luke and it is not an accidental statement at all that Herod himself, also, was at Jerusalem at that time. I say it looks as if it might be an accident but it is not; it is the finger of God. And so the man who had looked forward to seeing Jesus, who had played a great and prominent part in the preaching of the word in the land of Palestine had been responsible for the murder of the forerunner, John the Baptist, the relative of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the greatest man of the Old Testament age. This man happens to be at Jerusalem at this time also.

Herod’s history is the history of the soul of a whirling. He was a man who had a good birth but like men who have good birth if you go back far enough the ancestry becomes dubious. I have said before that there are very few family trees that do not need spraying somewhere. And so Herod was a man of good birth, a very prominent birth, but if you go far enough back you come to a murderer whose name was Herod the Great. As a matter of fact if you go far enough back you go back to Esau, for Herod was an Edomite and a descendent of Esau, and represents that which Esau and Edom meant in the history of Israel. And as a matter of fact when Herod stood before Jesus it was Esau standing before Jacob again. That is, he was the true representative of Esau and our Lord Jesus was the true representative of the true and genuine Jacob in whom there is no real Jacob or guile.

Herod was a handsome man, he was a sensual man. He had a fatal fascination for women. He was a Rock Hudson kind of character in royal robes. He was artistic, he was ambitious, he was religious, and furthermore, he had a code of honor. You can sense that in the events that took place in the murder of John the Baptist. He was fond of gay

trappings. In a word, he was a 1st Century swinger. And yet the Bible says that he was evil and Godless.

Now this morning in the time that we have I want to trace the story of Herod in seven parts, and first of all the family of Herod Antipas. I wish I had time to turn to the second chapter of the Gospel of Matthew and read the account in which Herod the great was involved. Herod Antipas, the Herod who faced the Lord Jesus, was the son of Herod the Great. Herod the Great had been king of Judea from 40 to 4 BC. He was the king who was ruling when Jesus was born.

Now Herod Antipas was not born in saintly succession because while Herod the Great was a good administrator, particularly in his latter days he became a wicked and suspicious and murderous man. In a fit of rage he murdered his favorite wife; he had a number of wives. And not only did he murder his favorite wife, but he murdered the children that he had through her. In fact, he murdered so many of his children that Augustus, the Roman Emperor, said, “It’s better to be Herod’s *sus* than Herod’s *buio*.” Or, “It’s better to be Herod’s pig than it is to be Herod’s son.” It’s safer.

So Herod Antipas was the son of a very wicked man indeed. He had inherited the territories of Galilee and Perea. Now this was a poor share in the kingdom of his father and he received these with great chagrin, for he thought that he was going to receive better kingdoms. But Galilee and Perea were his kingdoms. He married the Nabatea king Aretas IV daughter but he later divorced her for Herodias, as we read in the account in Matthew 14. That’s the first thing that I want to point out about Herod; his family.

The next thing is Herod’s imprisonment of John, and if you will I’m going to ask you if you have your Bibles to turn with me this time to the 3rd chapter of the Gospel of Luke in which we have a very brief statement of Herod’s imprisonment of John. And since there is a point in this text that I want to mention I want you to read this account too. It’s Luke chapter 3, verse 19 through verse 20, “But Herod the Tetrarch, being

reproved by him for Herodias his brother Philip's wife, and for all the evils which Herod had done, added this yet above all, that he shut up John in prison.”

The background of this statement in Luke chapter 3 is something like this, one day Herod happened to be in Jerusalem. In an evil hour his eyes fell on his brother, Herod Philip's wife. Her name was Herodias. Now this was not Herod Philip the tetrarch who also appears in the gospel records later, but nevertheless as he looked upon this sensual woman he became infatuated with her. He divorced his wife and married Herodias and that was the beginning of his woes. John, just a few months later or at least a short time later, happened to be baptizing at Aenon. Now Aenon is just a little to the west of the River Jordan and is in the territory of Galilee. And so John was baptizing in the territory of Herod Antipas. We do not know the details for this is not told us. But we are told that John spoke to Herod and he said, “It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother Philip's wife, Herodias.” I would assume that Herod Antipas has called John the Baptist to him, after all it is often true that men who are sensual and full of the fury of the passions which men like Herod have, it's often true that they also have a tremendous interest in religious or spiritual things and apparently there had been planted in the heart of Herod a desire, spiritually. Now this desire never came to fruition because he rejected but he at least was the kind of man who was interested. Sometimes men who are the most wicked are the most sensitive because, of course, they have the greatest sense of guilt. At this stage in Herod's life he apparently felt the guilt of the decision that he had made with regard to his wife and the infatuation and the ensuing divorce and remarriage.

And so when John was nearby and the fires of religious revival were sweeping the land of Galilee and Perea, he called for John the Baptist and John appeared before him. Now John was not a man to condone crime. He wasn't a pussyfooting kind of preacher who always sits on the fence and gives us sweet words that mean absolutely nothing. He was one who spoke the truth plainly and clearly and he stood before Herod and he spoke not only of his divorce but you notice that this statement says that he condemned Herod

for all the evils that he had done. I think that he summed up - these evils were summed up in that attitude that Herod had toward marriage and divorce in which he, a Sadducee himself, had violated the Law of Moses, but that was not the only thing. There were other things about this man. And so John the Baptist stood in the presence of this man who was the ruler in the territory and said, “It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother, Philip’s, wife Herodias.”

Now that took a great deal of courage for John the Baptist to say that. I’ve noticed this about many of our popular preachers today, they can do wonderful jobs of preaching of the text of the word of God but very seldom does a preacher today ever reprove one of our rulers, one of our leaders. Now it is often said, and said sometimes among evangelicals such as you, that we ought not to meddle in such things. That is not true in my opinion. As you know, and you’ve listened to the preaching of the gospel here, very little is said about politics and less is said about what side of the fence you should be on politically. But it is the right of a servant of God, in fact it is his duty to speak out against that which is evil as the occasion demands it. And John the Baptist stood in the presence of this man, requested by him to come and he spoke right to the heart of this man and put his finger upon the evil in his life.

Now Herod reacted as men like this often react, he reacted as a coward. He had a home in Tiberias on the Sea of Galilee, a city that he had built, and he also had a palace at Machaerus which was down to the East of the Jordan River. And there he also had a dungeon and so he put John the Baptist in his private dungeon. You can go to that dungeon today and you can go down and look in the deep with which John the Baptist was placed and he was there.

But you cannot imprison words and John the Baptist had spoke the truth. The conscience has a tremendous power; the conscience can remember things that no one else could possibly remember. It can reecho these things and the conscience catches words that come under the conviction of God’s Holy Spirit, it remembers those things and

it preaches them back to the mind. And that is what happened to Herod Antipas after he imprisoned John. And so here is a man, then, who is torn by the fact that he is guilty, that he is wicked and evil and has violated the law of God. He is torn by this and torn also by the fact that he is fatally infatuated with this woman and also infatuated with the power which was his as the king or tetrarch of Judea and Perea.

The third story in Herod’s life is the preaching of John the Baptist. Now will you turn to read with me one text from the 6th chapter of Mark. Now this chapter is the parallel to Matthew chapter 14 but there is here at least one thing, there are actually several others which are not stated in Matthew 14, and I want you to read the 20th verse of Mark 6, “For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and observed him, (or kept him, kept him safely,) and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly.” So here is the picture then: John the Baptist is in the deep which is not very far from the palace and Herod is torn by his conscience and by his desires, his fleshly, sensual desires and underneath there is this strange, fatal fascination for the Baptist, the prophet of God. And so from time to time Herod, as his conscience begins to hang heavy upon him, sends for John the Baptist and John the Baptist comes over to the palace and preaches to Herod. And Herod, in spite of the fact that John is condemning him in the words that he says feels a kind of attraction to him. These strangely irresistible words that the prophet of God speaks to him, and these words of John the Baptist held this weak man in awe.

Now Herodias was the kind of woman who immediately, by instinct -- they say that women have special instinct, I’m willing to believe it -- this woman had some instinct that enabled her to see that the real problem in their family life was John the Baptist. Herod was not happy because John was in the prison and he called him up to the palace, and then he would go back to the prison and then he would call him back to the palace. And Herodias knew that she could never be happy as long as that prophet of God was living.

I think that Herod’s struggle with his conscience was the same kind of struggle that you and I have. Very often in the cool nights Herod would wander out upon his palace and look out toward the west and he would see the hills of that land and the stars above and he would think about the fact that he had sinned against God. And he would wrestle with his conscience and finally his conscience would seem to get the best of him as he thought of the things that John the Baptist had said to him. Then he went to bed. He lay down in his bed by the side of Herodias and looked over at this woman who was lying by his side and he saw the cold lines of the sensual character and he made a determination in his heart that tomorrow things were going to be different and he was going to sever that bond which was about him. But then when the woman awakened and the crowds who do business about king’s palaces were there and Herodias came in and she looked all of the part of his own queen he was attracted again by that which he saw in her in a physical and fleshly way and those resolves that he had weakly made the night before fled. And this went on, week after week and month after month.

Well the fourth chapter is inevitable. And it is Herod’s murder of John. So will you turn to that 14th chapter of the Gospel of Matthew and let’s look at this chapter which we might entitle The Beheading of a Baptist. Now here we have the tragedy of a vindictive, implacable woman. The prophet is in prison. Now it’s not unusual for those who lecture the rich and the royal to be in prison. As a matter of fact when we turn to the Book of Acts and we read about the apostles we read about them being put in prison for the things that they say. Today no prophets are in prisons, at least in this country. And perhaps it’s due to two things: we are kind of adjusted now to the gospel in this country, and we accept it as part of our Western way of life even though it doesn’t mean anything much to us personally; and then the second thing is that the preachers of today are not disturbing very many people and so consequently they can live with us and we are not in prison.

I think of the Apostle Paul who also spoke about prisons. In fact he sat in prisons more frequent and it was not unusual at all for Paul to be in prison. Think of the time when he was in prison and Felix was his imprisoner and you remember that Felix called for Paul and Paul reasoned about righteousness and self control and judgment. And Felix was strangely moved; in fact he enjoyed the things that Paul told him. He called him out of his prison a number of times to hear but as a matter of fact his heart had never been touched, he really was looking for a bribe.

Now John the Baptist is in prison and Herodias’ breath is breathing hot down the back of Herod Antipas and he must do something. Now the woman, I think, is the instigator. I think that she must have come a few weeks before the birthday of his accession to the throne for she was very ambitious for him; we know from secular history in Josephus. And so she probably suggested, “Why don’t we have a banquet in order to celebrate the accession which you had to the throne of Perea and Galilee,” and he agreed. And so they began to have a few drinks and soon the crowd that was gathered there of the nobles and the important men in Galilee and Perea in this great banquet hall began to become more and more festive. And finally they reached the stage of intoxication and some were probably passing out and Herod the king is drunk. At this point Herodias sends in her daughter, her name by tradition is Salome. And Salome came in and danced her sensuous dance which was the dance of a wanton damsel, the daughter of a degenerate offspring of the once noble Maccabees. Nothing is more degenerate than the person who degenerates from a high and lofty and noble position. And the Maccabees were some of the noble whites of the history of Israel and Salome’s mother was descended from them.

And so the dance took place and you can just imagine what happened. There was a lot of hooting and whistling on the part of the men and Herod is drunk and you can see him staggering around the room and finally you hear him say that he’s going to give everything that he has even to the half of his kingdom to this woman because of her

wonderful dancing. And he repeats it two or three times because in the 9th verse the word oath’s is plural not because it has the apostrophe S by the way but because the Greek text is plural at that point. So apparently he shouted this oath out several times, “I’m going to give you Salome whatever you ask, whatever you ask,” and you can see him staggering all over that banquet hall making this foolish braggart’s oath. And Herodias’ daughter sees that the time has come to go home to mother and so when he has promised her everything that he has to the half of his kingdom she leaves and she leaves in a hurry. I think that Herod must have looked around in a few moments and said, “Where’s Salome?” And someone said, “She’s gone home to mother.” Little did he realize what was happening. And so the woman went home to mother and there she asked her mother, “He’s promised me everything, ma, what shall I ask?” And mother said, “The head of John the Baptist on a platter.” The girl turns, she’s not disturbed by that at all, she turns, she goes back into the hall and she tells the king that she has a request to make. And he says, “Ask on.” “And the request is this; give me the head of John the Baptist on a platter.”

Now I know that men take various things to sober up. You throw them in the shower, you give them lots of coffee, you do other things to get them sober, but I think this must have been the most affecting sobering device that has ever been imagined. Herod is immediately sober. In fact, he is in the soberness of the fear of God which has come upon his soul. Someone has said, “There are sudden destructions as well as sudden salvations.” I believe that. I believe that men can be saved just like this, the moment they put their trust in Jesus Christ. But I believe also that there is a time in a man’s life when morally he has passed the point of no return. We do not know it, we can never know it, only God knows it but he teaches it in his word. We may give the gospel to a man as long as he lives, hopeful that he has never passed the point of no return. But the word of God teaches that there is such a point, that we can so violate the mercy and grace of God that finally in righteousness he must judge and Herod apparently is a man who has done

that. He doesn’t hesitate, immediately he sends the man off. Now that is not stated in our text but it is stated in Mark chapter 6, that he immediately sent the executioner off to get the head of John the Baptist.

Many years ago one of the great intellectuals of this country was a man by the name of Aaron Burr. I don’t know whether you realize it or not but until a few years ago Aaron Burr had the highest marks that had ever been made at Princeton University. When I was on the campus of Princeton preaching a few years back one of the young men in the Christian fellowship on campus had a possibility of topping Aaron Burr’s all time record at Princeton University. This man was an intelligent man. When he was at Princeton a revival broke out on the campus of that university. A friend urged Aaron Burr to accept Jesus Christ. He wrestled with the question and finally one night he spoke to God and he said, “God, if you leave me alone I’ll leave you alone.” He testified afterwards that at that point all conviction for sin left him. Years later a friend came up to Mr. Burr and said, “Mr. Burr I’d like for you to meet a friend of mine.” Burr said, “If he’s anything like you I’d like to meet him too.” He said, “My friend’s name is Jesus Christ, I’d like for you to accept him as your personal savior.” Burr told his story, he said, “You know, ever since that decision that I made many years ago in Princeton University I’ve never had the slightest inclination to become a Christian.”

There is such a time in a man’s life, and Herod has passed that point. The executioner goes down the hill to Machaerus, the dungeon. He goes down into the deep, he takes John the Baptist, he takes off the head of this noble man, one of the noblest who has ever lived and takes it back on a platter, gives it to the king who in turn gives it to Salome, who then takes it to her mother Herodias.

When you think of Herod and the decision that seemed to face him in which he suddenly decided here is a man who knows the law of God on the one hand, who had heard the voice of conscience over and over again, but now as he looks out at these - at this miserable motley crowd of society of the day before him he thinks more of their

feelings about his code of honor, his human code of honor, than he does about the honor of God and about the law of God. He is a man to whom a breach of the Decalogue of the Ten Commandments is less dreadful than a breach of etiquette. It would not have been sin for Herod to break his oath; it would have been repentance to break his oath. Sometimes I think you know that we look at divine things in this way. We tend to look at things from the standpoint of the human so much that you kind of sympathize with Herod for not breaking his word. How ridiculous. We break our word with God to keep our word with evil men, an evil word at that.

Morgan says, “The maudlin honor of an evil oath.” The text said he was sorry. Yes, he was sorry. He was sorry with the grief of the world. The Apostle Paul has some things to say about grief. Not only do the saints grieve but others grieve also. In the second epistle which Paul wrote to the Corinthians in the 10th verse he says, “For Godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation, not to be repented of: but sorrow of the world worketh death.” That was the sorrow that Herod Antipas had. It was the sorrow of the world. It was not deep. It was not the sorrow that comes from God and hence it works death. And that, of course, is what happens. And so with the gory head of the Baptist on the platter Herod Antipas has made his decision. But the night of his soul is to merge into a yet deeper night.

The fifth aspect of the story of Herod is the preaching of Jesus. Will you look at the 14th chapter in the first two verses? “At that tetrarch heard of the fame of Jesus, (this is after the death of John,) and he said unto his servants, This is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead; and therefore mighty works do show forth themselves in him.” Luke says he was perplexed and the word that is used “diaporeo” is a word that means to be perplexed greatly. And so when news came of the teaching and the ministry and the works of Jesus of Nazareth there was so much about them that reminded Herod of John that at first he wondered if it really could be John the Baptist who had been raised from the dead. Other said, “No, it’s Elijah.” Some said, “Oh, it’s one of the prophets.” But

Herod, deep down in his heart, was wrestling with the fact, he thought that it might be John the Baptist who had been raised from the dead. So obsessed by his secret fears he hangs on the pendulum of disbelief because he had put John to death but believe in John’s resurrection. And he wasn’t the only one either. Origen, the Alexandrian church father, has said that there is a tradition to the effect that Jesus looked something like John the Baptist. We know they were related and it is, of course, possible which may have heightened the similarity between them. But his message was similar to John’s; he said the same thing, “Repent ye, for the kingdom of heavens is at hand.” He did some of the same mighty works and he also spoke to the Pharisees and Sadducees in the same spirit and disposition.

The thing that amazes me about this man Herod is the fact that in a crisis his philosophy collapses. He was a Sadducee. A Sadducee, you see; that’s what he was. Now what is the basic philosophy of a Sadducee? Among other things a Sadducee is a man who doesn’t believe in the resurrection of the dead. And yet when Jesus comes along his conscience speaks and he says, “It’s John raised from the dead.” I talk with a lot of people in the world; they have all kinds of philosophies. I have a first cousin, he’s very dear to me, he’s the President of Dan River Mills. As you can see, he’s made a tremendous success in life. I sat down at his home not long ago and he told me about the African safari that he and his friends had taken last summer and he spoke about how he had gone into some African tribes and how they were all happy down in Africa without Christianity and I had to listen to it. And I did listen to it. I listened to all that he had to say. But I could not help but know that deep down in this man’s heart there is a tremendous sense of inadequacy when it comes to the gospel of Christ. This was just a palliative for his conscience for, you see, God has so brought it to pass that he, the one who has created our spirits, is able to take by his Holy Spirit and bring into the hearts of every one of us a deep conviction in spite of what we may say with our head and with our lips. That is true, that is true.

J. T. Maassen was one of the great Bible teachers of a generation or two ago, and Mr. Maassen had a friend who was a business man. He came to talk to him and he kept saying, “I don’t believe in hell, I don’t believe in hell, I won’t believe in Hell.” Mr. Maassen said, “I’m not trying to get you to believe in Hell, I’m just asking you to accept Jesus Christ as your personal savior.” He said, “I won’t believe in Hell,” and left. That night he was in a room and he was wrestling in his conscience with the facts concerning Christ. He awakened about 2 o’clock, he looked out through his window and he saw flames shooting from the window of a building across the way. He said, “I’m in Hell.” And then he began to think. You see, his conscience had spoken before his mind had had time to marshal its arguments. And as he thought he realized that deep down in his heart he did believe in hell. That he had lots of arguments intellectually against them but God, the Holy Spirit, had gone right through those arguments to his heart. He accepted Christ as his savior. Six months later he wrote Mr. Maassen and he said that he had discovered in Jesus Christ the peace and happiness and joy of life itself. And then he added, “Christ is the wisdom.” That’s something for an intellectual man to say. And so when the preaching came, Herod is greatly disturbed.

Now the sixth chapter, Herod and Jesus’ warning: not long after this, I don’t really know exactly how long, the Pharisees came to the Lord Jesus when he was in the territory of Herod and delivered a warning. In Luke chapter 13, in verse 31, we read,

“The same day there came certain of the Pharisees, saying unto him, Get thee out, and depart hence: for Herod will kill thee. He said unto them, Go ye, and tell that fox, Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be perfected. Nevertheless I must walk today, and tomorrow, and the day following: for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem.”

This was a plot between the Pharisees and Herod. Neither wanted Jesus in Galilee. Herod didn’t want him there because of the trouble that the people might give him. The Pharisees wanted Jesus out of Galilee so he would come to Judea because there they could lay their hands upon him. But Jesus is not fooled by that fox. As a matter of fact that word is in the feminine here, that vixen. And so he sends word back to Herod, he’s a John the Baptist kind of man, isn’t he? He doesn’t mind saying that this man is nothing but a crafty fox and he understand him. And he told these Pharisees, he said, “You go right back to your boss there and you tell him this, tell him that I’m casting out demons and I’m doing my cures today in spite of the trouble that they cause in Galilee. And the third day, (this is figurative expression for a short time,) I shall be perfected. And if you think, Herod, that you’re going to take hold of me and slay me you’re mistaken, and tell him that. As a matter of fact, if I’m going to be taken it is you Pharisees who are going to do it and you are going to do it in Jerusalem because a prophet’s place is to perish in the place of religion.” That’s where true prophets perish. They don’t perish out in the streets, they perish in the church. That’s where they perish. They perish where the religious leaders are, that’s their death trap and Jesus spoke these words to that man, that’s chapter six.

I must hasten to chapter seven. The day comes, Jesus is in Jerusalem, the prophecies are going to be fulfilled. The sign that this wicked man wanted is fulfilled right under his nose. He’s there, he’s taken by the Jews, he appears before Pilate. The word Galilee is mentioned and this man Pilate who is the same kind of man, a fence straddler as we have seen. Galilee, perhaps I can get him off of my hands and so he sends him to Herod.

In Luke chapter 23 we read that Jesus came in before Herod and Herod was exceeding glad. Don’t believe it, don’t believe it for a moment. He wasn’t exceeding glad because now the savior is in his presence and he can put his trust in him and be saved. He’s happy because he’s been troubled by his conscience through this man and he wants

to see him perform some mighty work. It’s a coarse curiosity that comes because he desires a sign, a miracle. And so he plies Jesus with questions and we read this amazing fact, “He answered him nothing.” I’ve said this before, I say it again, I’ve attended many sessions in which men were taught how to witness to others. I’ve never, never in all of my life, ever, ever heard a teacher tell me that there is a time that we should say nothing. And Jesus is the greatest soul winner who ever lived, would you not agree? Not in numbers, but in fact. He never made a mistake.

Is there a time when we have to be silent? Jesus was silent. Finally before Pilate, completely before Herod, he didn’t even give him spiritual law number one, much less two, three, and four. Now I’m not trying to make fun of people who are trying to elicit interest in witnessing to others. I hope, of course, that you are a witness for Jesus Christ and it’s always best to err by saying something than not saying anything. But it’s best of all to do the will of God. Jesus answered him nothing. He at least spoke to Caiaphas and wasted a good prophecy on him. He spoke to Pilate and pleaded with him until finally Pilate passed that point. With Judas he had words of tender appeal. Herod, not a word. Ephraim is joined to his idols, let him alone, he will not cast his pearls before swine, as he himself has said. And Herod belongs to the swine.

Now they set him at nought, they mocked him, they arrayed him, they put a garment of a king about him, and they acted as if he were a king; all in order to excruciatingly humiliate the King of Israel. But God, of course, was speaking through it all. This is the King, this is the King. Think all down through the ages of eternity, Herod looks back to that time when he put the kingly garments upon Jesus of Nazareth and didn’t believe it. The man who crowned Jesus is not in the kingdom after all. A man who can do no signs, a man who could not even hardly become angry like John the Baptist at least became angry in the presence of Herod, well he’s just a helpless figure and he’s to be mocked and insulted and that’s all.

Now I conclude, what’s the final evaluation of Herod in the word of God? The last mention of Herod is in Acts chapter 4. I think it’s an interesting verse, there’s not a whole lot of information in it, but I like a phrase or two there. We read, the Christians now are thinking about the opposition that they have and we read, “For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together.” Against thy holy child Jesus; against the Lord and against his Christ. That’s the word about Herod; against thy holy child Jesus. What a terrible, terrible word to put after a man’s name; against thy holy child Jesus, but that’s what he was.

The lesson of Herod is the lesson of spiritual suicide. With great privileges he hardened himself in impenitence and finally destroyed his capacity to repent. He knew the law, he was a Sadducee, he heard John’s preaching, he heard Jesus’ works and he also heard his word, he even had a prophecy from Jesus that he would suffer in Jerusalem and there die, he had the witness of his conscience which he so resisted until finally he had the piece of a stagnant pool. And ultimately he stands before Jesus himself and I doubt not that he probably stood before some of the apostles as they went out preaching the word. Later, history says that Herod got in a war with Aretas, his former father-in-law, and he worsted in that war. The people turned against him and finally he went to Rome in order to solicit some more dominion and that which he had was taken away. And finally he was banished to Lyon in Gaul.

John Hutton says of Christianity that Christianity exists not to satisfy some idol curiosity but to give the answer to some lonely and utter cry. That’s why Christianity has come into being, God is anxious to save the souls of men. He wants them to come to Jesus Christ and find the peace that comes through Christ. That’s why we have a gospel to preach, that’s why we are here. We are here as the creatures of God to hear about our Lord Jesus Christ, to receive the good news concerning him, to find the will of God and to live to the Glory of God in our lives and enjoy the presence of God throughout all

eternity. That’s why we are here. If we resist it is possible for us to resist in such a way that we cannot receive the message.

Dallas Seminary had a student once who had an interesting experience. He lived in a home with another man and this man bought an alarm clock. It was a long time ago and the alarm clock had three strong rings, and the man bought it in order that he might wake up and get to his work. The first week everything went well. Everybody in the house was awakened. The first morning the man heard that alarm, those three piercing rings, and he leaped out of the bed while he was still sleeping and stood there trembling. Soon he became accustomed to that but it disturbed him a little so he muffled it, he put something over it to soften it. A few weeks later he came down to breakfast late and he said, “You know, that alarm only rang twice this morning.” A few weeks later he came down and he said, “It rang only once.” Well you know what happened, not long after he came down really late, he said, “My alarm didn’t go off at all this morning.” In spite of the fact that everybody in the house heard it, all of those mornings. You see, what had happened was this, the message had come and the sound had beat upon his eardrums and had set the ossicles in motion and the information was relayed to the brain; noise, get up. The brain said, “I won’t, go away.” And soon, “Go away,” soon, “Go away, go away.” Finally the message was not heard. It was not heard because he would not hear.

I do not know your experience with the gospel of Christ. It is just possible some of you are like that. The gospel came with a clarion call the first time you heard it but you said, “Go away.” Perhaps you’ve tried to muffle it with philosophy, psychology, worldly ambition, pleasure. Some of these things which may be very good in themselves but if they take the place of Jesus Christ and the truth of God they can be the means of death until finally you don’t hear it, not because the word it doesn’t go forth it’s because you cannot hear it now. I do hope before God that there is no one in this auditorium who is in that state. There is nothing worse than to be in the state of not being able to hear because you will not hear and so I plead with you this morning. My name is S.

Lewis Johnson Jr., your name is your own, this is Believers Chapel, this is March the 12th, 1967, you shall remember it all throughout eternity. If you have never accepted Jesus Christ as your savior the Lord Jesus died upon the cross for you, he was and is the king of Israel and he wants to save your soul. And you may have life if you will simply turn to him, acknowledge your guilt and say, “Thank you Lord for dying for me. I take you as my personal savior.” And you pass from darkness into light, from death into life, and enjoy the presence of the Lord Jesus now and forevermore. “Unto Thee will I cry, oh Lord,” the psalmist said. “Oh Lord, my rock, be not silent unto me; lest if Thou be silent unto me I become like them that go down to the pit.” May God help you to escape the judgment to come. Shall we stand for the benediction?

[Prayer] Father we thank Thee for Thy word. We thank Thee for the testimony to the grace of God. It is wonderful grace, Lord, that Thou dost trouble our consciences, may we respond. Now may grace, mercy, and peace be and abide with all who know our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. For Jesus’ sake. Amen.