

THE GREAT WENCHOSTER BIBLE

Mark 6: 14-29

14. And king Herod heard of Jesus; (for His name was spread abroad and gossiped about in the low houses of the streets, and His deeds were reckoned to be mightier than those of the entertainers who did amuse the crowds nightly in the bars telling jokes about rabbis at weddings and bar mitzvahs:) and he said, that John the Baptist was risen from the dead, and therefore mighty works do shew forth themselves in him. Crikey!
15. Others said, John the Who? for they had not gone out to the Jordan since they had other things to do like buying a field, or a yoke of oxen, getting married, or thrashing a peasant. But those that did recall the name said, Nay, He is Elias [1]. And others said, Possibly. Of a truth He is a prophet, but if not Elias he is as one of the prophets, for they did hedge their bets and refuse to commit themselves.
16. But when Herod heard thereof and was shown an artist's sketch of the man, he said, Yep! It is John, whom I beheaded, although not personally you understand, for I recognise the beard: he is risen from the dead. Seriously spooky. Tell that to the Sadducees.
17. For Herod himself had sent forth and laid hold upon John [2], and bound him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife: for being filled with lustful thoughts and desires he had married her in a quiet ceremony with just a few guests and a small cake.
18. For John had said unto Herod, It is not lawful for thee to have (3) thy brother's wife, at least not whilst he is alive. And he did write lewd verses about them both that became popular amongst the people, but are not listed in this book.
19. Therefore Herodias had a quarrel against him, and would have killed him; but she could not:
20. For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, most of which are unrecordable, and despite a slight odour of the desert, heard him gladly.
21. And when a convenient day was come, that Herod on his birthday made a supper to his lords, (with an huge cake this time with exceeding large and numerous pink candles,) high captains, and chief estates of Galilee, and his frowning accountants, and Gervais his favourite barber;
22. And when the daughter of the said Herodias came in, and danced with a pole and many veils [4] and a large python, (let the reader misunderstand,) and super-pleased Herod and them that sat with him, the king said unto the damsel, Ask of me whatsoever thou wilt, and I will give it thee.
23. And he sware unto her, Whatsoever thou shalt ask of me, I will give it thee, even my best stallion or the eunuchs of my household, unto the half of my kingdom.
24. And she went forth, and said unto her mother, What shall I ask? And she said, Well, eunuchs are no bloody use. Ask for the head of John the Baptist instead. And the daughter did blanch at this, but her mother was persistent and did remind her of her filial responsibilities,
25. And she came in straightway with haste unto the king, and asked, saying, I will that thou give me by and by in a charger – and by that I mean a large platter - the head of John the Baptist. But make sure there is a cover on the dish, for the sight of it might make me exceedingly unwell.
26. And the king was exceeding sorry; yet for his oath's sake, and for their sakes which sat with him, he would not reject her, for all at the banquet had heard him promise and were looking to see if he would keep his word.
27. And immediately the king sent an executioner, and commanded his head [5] to be brought: and, picking up his snickersnee in the back passage, he went and beheaded him in the prison,

28. And having wiped it, tidied it up a bit, and dressed it with sprigs of herbs and sliced onions and put an apple in his mouth, brought his head in a charger - a large platter - and gave it to the damsel: and with much haste and some heaving the damsel gave it to her mother who inwardly grinned.
29. And when his disciples heard of it, they came and took up his corpse, and laid it in a tomb. It is unrecorded in this book what happened to the head.

Notes:

1. Members of Herod's court regularly used their own versions of people's names. Hence Elijah was referred to as Elias. Similarly, Moses was called Mossy and Jonah called Joan. Jeez was never used except when tripping over things.
2. He did not lay hands on him personally but did send some of his soldiers to do the deed.
3. Here the original meaning is unclear. The verb "to have" could mean to possess or to have intimate relations. Knowing Herod the latter interpretation is preferred.
4. Later authorities suggest seven veils. Seven being the sacred number that may reveal the divine.
5. "His head", that is, the head of John the Baptist not the executioner. The grammar of this passage could be clearer.