

Jesus Leaves Judea

Matthew 4:12, 14:3-5; Mark 1:14, 6:17-20; Luke 3:19-20, 4:14; John 4:1-4

“Jesus did not leave Judea because His ministry there was a failure but because it was too popular and successful.” JW Shepard

Reasons Jesus Left Judea

1. The Imprisonment of John the Baptist – Matthew, Mark, & Luke John had been arrested and taken south to Herod’s winter palace on top of a mountain just east of the Dead Sea.

“¹²Now when (“after” Mark 1:14) Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, he departed (“came” Mark 1:14) (“returned in the power of the Spirit” Luke 4:14) into Galilee (“preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God,” Mark 1:14) (“and there went out a fame of him through all the region round about.” Luke 4:14).” Matthew 4:12

John’s Imprisonment and Jesus’ Ministry – The ministries of Jesus and John the Baptist’s were not only happening at the same time and relatively close together but also closely related! Both had basically the same message and both baptized. The persecution that reached John would undoubtedly extend to John’s disciples and all associated with Jesus’ group. To protect the new disciples and Himself, Jesus had to move for “his hour had not yet come!” Throughout His ministry Jesus will protect “his hour” – God’s will for Him to provide salvation for the world! John 2:4; 7:30; 8:20----12:23; 13:1

“returned in the power of the Spirit” – Jesus had been in Galilee for a short time but now He returned to fully engage in His mission to call and make disciples. Luke stresses the fact that Jesus moved and ministered in the power of the Holy Spirit. (Luke: 4:1) This was Jesus’ source of power, and we have the same Spirit! John 3:34; Acts 1:8

“preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God,” – This phrase is found in Mark 1:14 and is translated more often, preaching the “good news of/from God.” Most older manuscripts do not have the word “kingdom.” The idea of “gospel” or “good news” is almost always used in other English translations. So what is this message? This speaks of the rule of God in the lives of man. But this is a decision one must accept, believe, and submit to! It is what Jesus was teaching to Nicodemus when He said, “Ye must be born again.” A change, a repenting of one’s direction must be made, and submitting to God’s way. The wonderful gospel of God!

“there went out a fame of him through all the region round about.” – Just as in Judea, news about Jesus went out extensively! Of course, it was the miracles that brought in the great crowds!

- **History Behind the Imprisonment** This information concerning the arrest and accusation against John the Baptist was given in the Scriptures at the time of his martyrdom. We will study the death of John later when found in the chronological order of Jesus’ life. At this time he is arrested and held in prison.

“¹⁷For 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 had married her, (²⁰ Added yet this above all, that he shut up John in prison.” Luke 3:20) ¹⁸For John (“reproved...him...for all the evils which

Herod had done.” Luke 3:19) had said (Gk – verb form – “repeatedly said”) unto Herod, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife.¹⁹ Therefore Herodias had a quarrel against him (Gk verb form – “continually had it in for him”), and would have killed him (Gk verb form – “continued to desire to kill him”); but she could not:²⁰ For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just (righteous) man and an holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly. (“And when he would have put him to death, he feared the multitude, because they counted him as a prophet.” Matt. 14:5) Mark 6:17-20

Please realize that John the Baptist called Herod out for more than his adultery and incest. Luke tells us John actually “reproved” him for “all the evils which Herod had done.” Though Herod was the one called out for his sin, it will be Herodias leading the attack on John and will ultimately push Herod into killing John.

Herod and Herodias:

Their Sin before God – The Bible passages are pretty plain about the immorality of Herod and Herodias. They lived lustful, undisciplined lives. The Herods – Herod the Great and his three sons – all would have called themselves practicing Jews but were really sinful, practicing politicians whose god was their positions. Both Matthew and Mark tell us John had pointed out the fact that Herod and Herodias’ sin was “not lawful.” This would mean, under Mosaic law---not a moral law, or cultural code, at this time---there was little moral or cultural disgrace associated with promiscuity! But before God they were gross sinners.

But don’t miss Luke 3:20, where it tells us beyond all Herod had done, he “Added yet this above all, that he shut up John in prison.” Before God this was his greatest sin!

Their Rebuke by John – John never shunned away from calling sin—sin! He didn’t say Herod’s immorality was just not honorable, not a safe lifestyle, nor a mistake that needed to be corrected! The fact was, Herod had a long list of sin – politically, he was lawless, cruel; personally, he was disloyal, adulterous, and committed incest. Matthew Henry said this concerning our need to be a faithful witness to holiness, “If we seek to please men, (rather) than their spiritual good, we are not the servants of Christ.” p. 1531 Remember, there will be times when we must not shun from calling out sin in the lives of others. Though we do it to see repentance in their lives and restoration before God, many time it will be met with conflict. (Luke 17:3; Gal. 6:1-5; James 5:19-20; I Tim. 5:20) As the Holy Spirit leads, we are to confront the sin humbly and gently in the lives of our brethren. A spirit of discipleship and restoration must be center, realize we are all traveling a journey together and so very easily we can slip into sin.

Their Attitude toward John Herod was a weak, sinful politician who loved the position he inherited but had little wisdom to retain it and this he knew! This is seen in Herod’s complicated relationship and attitude toward John.

Herod:

1. **Herod Hated John** - Herod had him arrested and desire to kill John because of the public rebuke made about his adultery, but it was Herodias that had insisted.
2. **Herod Feared John** - But many believe there was a benefit to Herod by ending John the Baptist’s public ministry. Remember, Herod was first a politician who loved his position. John had a great influence with the people for they understood he was a prophet of God. This would have caused Herod to fear both John and the people. John’s powerful words against Herod’s sins were doubtless causing more people to reject Herod and he could not afford this! Rome was always quick to shuffle their puppet leaders away if they felt it would please the people and keep peace. Herod did desire to kill John, but he

knew this would also stir up the people. He wouldn't have wanted to be the one who killed a prophet. Later on, the Religious Leaders had this same thought concerning Jesus. Matt. 21:46

- Herod Admired John** -The book of Mark gives interesting glimpses of the time John was in prison at Herod's palace. A strange combination of anger and admiration was in the heart of Herod toward John. The word "fear" found in verse 20, is often translated "in awe of". Why was this evil man in awe or feared John? We are told, because of John's just (righteous) and holy life. The KJV phrase "and observed him;" is almost always translated in English either "kept him safe" or "protected him." Please understand Herod might have hated John and feared him, but he also protected him from the evil reach of Herodias' plan to kill him! The New International Version (NIV) translated verse 20 this way, "because Herod feared John and protected him, knowing him to be a righteous and holy man. When Herod heard John, he was greatly puzzled; yet he liked to listen to him." Such a strange combination! Such turmoil in the life of Herod...conviction, fear, confusion, admiration, uncontrolled desires, anxiety. The conflict between his admiration for John and the attraction of his sinful relationships kept him in a state of inner confusion. Sounds like many people in the 21st century!

Herodias:

Herodias was plain evil. She not only wanted John arrested but killed. She was manipulative....she didn't care who she used, and the depths she threw her teenage daughter is appalling! She knew the weaknesses and insecurities of her husband and both embarrassed and went against his will to get the head of John the Baptist. I think it is easy to say, she was the driving force behind the adultery and their relationship. Who knows---bigger palace, tired of her husband, tired of her life, ready for some adventure---she was a heartless, wicked woman! When doing research on Herodias in ancient and church history writing, you find the word witch mentioned many times! Literally, a witch, servant of Satan! Not surprised!

2. Pressure of the Religious Leaders – Book of John

“When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, ²(Though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples,) ³He left Judaea, and departed again into Galilee. ⁴And he must needs go through Samaria.” John 4:1-4

Pharisees Fear – Jesus' ministry was drawing more disciples than John's. The Pharisees had openly rejected John's message and baptism but now they had a stronger Messenger with more followers– the One John even call the Messiah – preaching, baptizing, and doing outstanding miracles! This certainly put Jesus under the radar of their suspicion and hate! (Luke 7:29-35) More and more pressures would naturally arise. Christ knew that His "hour had not yet come!" (John 2:4; 7:30; 8:20 "is come" 12:23; 17:1 Father's timetable 13:1)

Jesus' Reaction – Jesus simply left Judea based on the pressure of the Pharisees. He had to protect the Father's plan! The Religious Leaders will eventually put Jesus on the cross, but there was work to be done before than.

“he must needs go through Samaria.” – This is a strong statement in the Greek. Jesus knew He had a meeting to keep with the Samaritan woman at the well! It was divinely appointed and spiritually necessary to go through Samaria. (Luke 4:14)

Believers Application:

Jesus moved His ministry north because of two negative events. We know trials can build our faith, but do you realize God can also use them to move us. As we look over our lives, often we realize how hard, sad, and difficult times can be used by God to shift us to a new place of His choosing.

Let's consider this thought from this incident of Christ and other passages in Scripture.

Because of the two negatives, John the Baptist's arrest and the pressure from the Pharisees, Jesus left Judea.

Let's consider how God could move us. We love a normal, same, an unchanged life! I'm convinced I would live the same life for 100 years with very little variation. I wonder how in Old Testament times those who were 500, 600, or more years, lived. Did they do pretty much the same thing, season after season, year after year? I think so! We all should understand that at times God has to change our location, our profession, our circle, our church, with negatives events and trials! We can find many examples of God moving people because of difficulty in the Bible. (Acts 8:1-4; 15) But know, we should not make those changes during difficulties based on fear, weariness, pressures, frustration, embarrassment, or persecution! During those difficult times we must be very in tune to the Holy Spirit, begging God for wisdom, and submissive to the will of our heavenly Father. (James 1:2-6a)