

# Mark 6:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But when Herod heard thereof, he said, It is John, whom I beheaded: he is risen from the dead.

## Analysis

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**But when Herod heard thereof, he said, It is John, whom I beheaded: he is risen from the dead.** Herod's tormented conscience fixates on one interpretation despite various theories circulating. 'When Herod heard thereof' (ἀκούσας ὁ Ἡρώδης, akousas ho Hērōdēs) indicates continuing reports of Jesus' ministry reached him. Unlike others' speculation, Herod pronounced with certainty: 'It is John, whom I beheaded' (Ὄντις ἐγὼ ἀπεκεφάλισα Ἰωάννην, Hon egō apekephalisa Iōannēn). The personal pronoun 'I beheaded' (ἐγὼ ἀπεκεφάλισα) emphasizes his direct responsibility—he couldn't escape guilt by blaming others (though the execution resulted from complicated circumstances, vv. 17-28).

'He is risen from the dead' (οὗτος ἠγέρθη, houtos ēgerthē) expresses Herod's superstitious dread—not theological belief in resurrection but guilty fear of supernatural retribution. This demonstrates how unregenerate conscience, while unable to save, torments with guilt. Herod experienced remorse (emotional regret) but not repentance (transformative turning to God). His fear didn't produce faith, just anxiety. Reformed theology distinguishes between worldly sorrow (producing death) and godly sorrow (producing repentance unto salvation, 2 Corinthians 7:10). Herod exemplifies the former—guilt without grace, conviction without conversion, fear without faith.

## Historical Context

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Beheading (ἀποκεφαλίζω, *apokephalizō*) was Roman execution method, typically reserved for citizens (non-citizens were crucified). John's execution at Machaerus fortress was Herod's decision, though he ruled under Roman authority. Josephus confirms Herod feared John's popularity might spark rebellion, adding political motive to Mark's account of Herodias's grudge (*Antiquities* 18.5.2). The belief in resurrection wasn't universal first-century Judaism—Sadducees denied it while Pharisees affirmed it. Herod's statement about John rising reflects not orthodox resurrection theology but popular superstition about ghosts or revenants. Ancient Mediterranean cultures widely believed in restless spirits of murdered persons returning to haunt killers. Literature from the period contains numerous ghost stories and supernatural revenge narratives. Herod's conscience, though seared by compromise, remained active enough to torment him—demonstrating that general revelation and natural law written on hearts (Romans 2:14-15) create guilt even without special revelation. Early church fathers used Herod as example of hardened heart that experiences conviction without conversion—warning against persistent sin that calms conscience through repeated compromise.

## Related Passages

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**Matthew 25:31** — Final judgment

**Revelation 20:12** — Judgment according to deeds

## Study Questions

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1. How does Herod's guilty conscience without repentance illustrate the difference between worldly sorrow and godly sorrow leading to salvation?
2. What does Herod's torment despite his power and position teach about sin's inability to deliver promised pleasure and peace?

## Interlinear Text

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ἀκούσας δὲ ὁ Ἡρώδης εἶπεν, ὅτι Ὁν ἐγὼ<sup>1</sup>  
heard But G3588 when Herod thereof he said whom G3739 I  
G191 G1161 G2264 G2036 G3754 G1473

ἀπεκεφάλισα Ἰωάννην οὗτος ἐστιν· αὐτὸς ἡγέρθη ἐκ  
beheaded John It is he is risen from  
G607 G2491 G3778 G2076 G846 G1453 G1537

νεκρῶν  
the dead  
G3498

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