

Mark 6:25

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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 the head of John the Baptist.

Analysis

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 the head of John the Baptist.

Salome's urgent return demonstrates the conspiracy's urgency and cruelty. 'She came in straightway with haste' (εἰσελθοῦσα εὐθὺς μετὰ σπουδῆς, eiselthousa euthys meta spoudēs) emphasizes immediate action—no delay, no reflection, just swift execution of her mother's plan. The haste prevented Herod from sobering up or reconsidering. 'I will that thou give me by and by' (Θέλω ἵνα ἐξαυτῆς δῷς μοι, Thelō hina exautēs dōs moi) uses emphatic language: 'I want... immediately'—demanding instant fulfillment, not allowing time for second thoughts.

'In a charger the head of John the Baptist' (ἐπὶ πίνακι τὴν κεφαλὴν Ἰωάννου τοῦ βαπτιστοῦ, epi pinaki tēn kephalēn Iōannou tou baptistou)—the 'charger' (πίναξ, pinax) was a large serving platter, typically for presenting food at banquets. This gruesome detail—serving a prophet's severed head as though it were dinner—reveals the conspiracy's depravity. The request's specificity and urgency trapped Herod: public vow before nobles, drunk and prideful, manipulated by female sexuality and family pressure. His weak character, sinful choices, and compromised position culminated in judicial murder of God's prophet. This illustrates how patterns of compromise create circumstances where doing right becomes increasingly difficult.

Historical Context

The Greek εὐθὺς μετὰ σπουδῆς (euthys meta spoudēs, 'immediately with haste') emphasizes conspiracy's time-pressure strategy—move quickly before Herod sobers or reconsiders. Ancient banquets lasted hours, involving much wine; Herodias knew Herod's judgment was impaired. The demand for John's head 'by and by' (exautēs, 'immediately, this very hour') prevented delay that might enable escape or intervention. Requesting the head on a serving platter (pinax) was shocking even by ancient standards—treating human remains as banquet food violated all decency. Some scholars see possible mockery: John spoke of repentance; Herodias serves his head at feast. Archaeological discoveries include large serving platters from Herodian period, typically used for roasted meat at banquets. The size would accommodate a severed head. Ancient writers (Josephus) confirm this execution but locate it at Machaerus fortress; Mark's account suggests it occurred near the banquet site. Early church tradition embellished the story: Herodias piercing John's tongue with needles, Salome's later death by beheading—reflecting horror at the crime and belief in divine justice.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How does the urgency and pressure in this request illustrate how Satan moves quickly to prevent reflection or repentance when tempting God's people?
2. What does the macabre detail of serving John's head on a banquet platter reveal about the depths of wickedness possible when hearts are hardened against God?

Interlinear Text

καὶ εἰσελθοῦσα εὐθέως μετὰ σπουδῆς πρὸς τὸν
And **she came in** **straightway** **with** **haste** **unto** G3588
G2532 G1525 G2112 G3326 G4710 G4314

βασιλέα ᾗτήσατο λέγουσα Θέλω ἵνα μοι δῷς ἐξαυτῆς
the king **and asked** **saying** **I will** **that** **me** **thou give** **by and by**
G935 G154 G3004 G2309 G2443 G3427 G1325 G1824

ἐπὶ πίνακι τὴν κεφαλὴν Ἰωάννου τοῦ βαπτιστοῦ
in **a charger** G3588 **the head** **of John** G3588 **the Baptist**
G1909 G4094 G2776 G2491 G910

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