

# Screenshots of Jesus

A companion study to the podcasts of Amber Albee Swenson

John the Baptist in prison:

Read Matthew 14:1-12.

It would be really easy to just say John the Baptist should have just kept his mouth shut. If he wouldn't have spoken out against Herod, he wouldn't have been put into prison. But let's go back and review John's role.

Read Matthew 3:1-2 and Luke 3:2-3. What was John's message?

John didn't change his message. Whether he was speaking to the crowds, to Roman soldiers or Herod himself his message was: Repent!

1. What does the word repent mean?

Herod made a tragic mistake in making a promise to his wife's daughter to give her anything she wanted without first knowing what she would ask for. In fact, in Matthew 5:37 Jesus said, "All you need to say is simply 'Yes' or 'No'; anything beyond this comes from the evil one."

Think of how many times in normal conversation we try to make people promise something.

*Promise me if this happens, you'll do this.*

*Promise you'll come see me again?*

Once I heard a pastor say, "*Raise your right hand and repeat after me: I promise to ...*"

That's a terrible example to give to God's children. Don't start to promise without knowing what you're walking into. Simply say, "I will do my best. I'll come if I can, etc."

2. When is it a good thing for someone to make a promise (and also to take it seriously)?

Herod's wife used Herod's foolishness to her advantage. How did he feel about it? (Matthew 14:9).

"John's disciples came and took his body and buried it. Then they went and told Jesus." Matthew 14:12

Herod was distressed, but not enough to say no. He cared far more about what people thought of him than about doing what was right. It was wrong to make an oath and break it. But it was also wrong to murder.

3. Can you think of a time when you made a bad decision and the only way out with some dignity was to choose the lesser of two evils?

4. How do you decide what to do when you know someone will be disappointed?

It's sad that John the Baptist met his earthly demise under such gruesome conditions and to appease a young woman who danced seductively for her stepdad and his friends. But John's earthly mission was done or God wouldn't have allowed him to die under those or any other circumstances. And that is what comforts us. Whoever dies at no matter their age; and whatever circumstances they die under, we can rest knowing that God allowed it so it was according to his plan and somehow for good.

5. Which promises of God assure us that is true?

**Big Idea:** Don't make silly promises; especially if you don't know what the person will ask of you. We can know no matter when a person dies, God has allowed it. While we grieve a life that often ends before we would want it to, we can be certain the person has fulfilled whatever God determined their life would be.

**Action Item:** If you are prone to making promises without thinking, make a point not to do it anymore. Pray for God to help you make wise and God-pleasing decisions.

**Prayer:** Thank you, Heavenly Father, for giving us your word so we can learn a better way to live. Help us to put your ways into practice. Forgive us for the times we've failed. Give us strength to live in ways that honor you. In Jesus' name, amen.