

He believed in God.

He was more certain of God and God's last word than he was of the world around him.

Ask Herod, do people come back from the dead? Of course not.

But when he heard of Jesus, of demons being cast out and the sick anointed, with oil, cured, Herod was convinced that Jesus was John raised from the dead. John, whom I beheaded, has been raised.

Herod believed that God was having the last word. But his belief was not hope, but despair.

What a horrible thing it is to wake up in the morning with yesterday hanging over your head. If Herod could talk, is this what he would say:

Why did I do it? I could say it was because of her, Herodias, my wife. I'd like to convince you and to convince myself that it is all her fault. John the baptist, that prophet of God, said it was wrong for me to marry her. She had been my brother's wife. God's word is clear that it was a sin for me to marry her. But I am king, I can decide for myself. I know what is best for me.

John said no. again and again John said no.

I don't like to be told what to do. I didn't want ^{the} people stirred up. Herodias found John to be an irritation. She wanted him silenced for good. Prison was a fair compromise.

You know, every so often I would go down and talk to my prisoner. John really believed in God. John believed it is possible to follow God with all your heart. That kind of talk perplexed me. In this modern world, could someone really follow God. Obey God, trust in God. John said so. I found being king too complicated for such a simple way of thinking about life.

The night it happened I never saw it coming. I'd been drinking a little, but I wasn't drunk. Herodias' daughter danced, such a simple, innocent dance. I've never seen anything so beautiful. So I made my promise. Ask anything, I'll give it to you. What would a little girl want, some candy, a trip to the seashore? A chance to stay up past her bedtime? I thought she'd have a request right away. But she talked to her mother first.

When she made her request I couldn't believe it, the head of John the baptist on a platter.

I'd like to tell you that I could blame my next decision on the alcohol. Or I'd like to tell you that I had no choice. But I just didn't want to look foolish, a man who makes promises he cannot keep. They would have all laughed at me the next day. So I did it. I ordered John beheaded and his head presented on the platter like the main course for the evening meal. Whatever that man deserved, it was not to be dishonored in this way. A few of the guests would not even look. Herodias' daughter rushed with the platter to present this gift to her mother, how she wanted to please her. And I am left with remembering, regretting.

Now this one named JEsus follows John. No, he has not come by the palace to tell me my marriage is wrong. I have not met him at all. But now the crowds follow him. He talks of God ruling over everyone's life, he invites people to join him in living under the rule of God. He's John all over again. He'll be no more successful. Maybe his head will not end up on a platter, but soon the people will tire of all this God talk and want some relaxation. People are people, they will never change. God can make all the laws God wants to but when people think they will be happier ignoring what God speaks, they will follow their own wisdom.

I'll go to hell. I'm sure of that. Most everyone else will too. Maybe God will hang onto a few, like John, or this JEsus. But most people

will just take the easy way out, like I did, like you do every day.
Politicians will be corrupt and money will buy influence and most everyone
will just be too weary to care enough to try to make a difference.

Why I'll bet that someday a whole society will spend enormous sums on
their entertainment, and begrudge the money needed for a decent education
for the poor. Some will waste more food in a month than others will have
to eat in a year. I'll bet that someday the dancing will not be so
innocent but that nakedness will be displayed without shame, and no one
will do anything about it.

If only I could begin again. Have hope once more. Believe God could
find a way to save even me.

What's this you say? Jesus? He'll give his life for me? God will
forgive me and save me for Jesus sake?

If I believed that I'd tell the whole world, Jesus would mean life
from the dead for me.