

Scene 1: John the Baptist Prepares the Way

CHARACTERS: Herod, Guards 1 & 2, Cuza, Herodias, Isaiah, John, Voice of God, Salome

SETTING: Israel, time of Christ

SCRIPTURE/BASED ON: Mark 1 and 6

Before you begin, read Luke 8:2-3. Some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases: Mary (called Magdalene) from whom seven demons had come out; Joanna the wife of Cuza, the manager of Herod's household; Susanna; and many others. These women were helping to support them out of their own means. Decide if you will play Cuza as a believer or non-believer or even as someone who changes between the scenes. If he does change, what changed him?

We do not know how old Salome was at the time she asked for John to be beheaded. Decide on an age. How will that decision affect how you deliver her lines? What emotion (fear, anger, insecurity, etc) prompts Herodias to want John killed? How will that affect your delivery?

HEROD: What is going on in the desert region?

GUARD 1: A man named John is baptizing.

GUARD 2: He preaches a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

CUZA: The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem have gone out to him.

GUARD 1: Confessing their sins, they are baptized by him in the Jordan River.

HERODIAS: Why does he do this? Who does he think he is?

CUZA: Some are quoting Isaiah the prophet.

HEROD: Read the scripture to me.

ISAIAH: I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way, a voice of one calling in the desert,

JOHN: 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.

HERODIAS: What does look like?

GUARD 1: Clothing made of camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist.

GUARD 2: He eats locusts and wild honey.

HEROD: What is his message?

JOHN: After me will come one more powerful than I, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.

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HERODIAS: He should be watched.

Scene 2: The Baptism and Temptation of Jesus

CUZA: King Herod, as you have requested, I have kept an eye of John who is baptizing.

HEROD: Good. I take it something new has happened?

CUZA: Yes. A Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee was baptized by John in the Jordan.

HERODIAS: So? He's baptized thousands by now.

CUZA: As Jesus was coming up out of the water, we saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove.

GUARD 1: And we heard a voice from heaven.

VOICE OF GOD: You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.

HEROD: I will go myself and here this John.

Scene 3: John the Baptist Condemns Herod's Marriage

CUZA: (*pointing*) That is John.

HERODIAS: He's looking our way.

JOHN: King Herod, it is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife.

HERODIAS: How dare he! Silence him!

HEROD: No, he puzzles me yet I like to hear him.

JOHN: It is not lawful for you to marry your brother Philip's wife while your brother yet lives.

HERODIAS: He should die for that statement.

HEROD: Let him be. He is a righteous and holy man. (*Herodias looks dumbfounded at his statement*)

Scene 4: John the Baptist Arrested

HERODIAS: That John keeps condemning our marriage. It is not right to criticize the king. You are the son of Herod the Great.

HEROD: The people hold that he is a prophet, possibly the Elijah promised to come.

HERODIAS: He should be executed.

HEROD: No, if he is Elijah we should let him be. You sound like Jezebel calling for Elijah's blood.

HERODIAS: At least have John arrested during your birthday celebration. Those at the banquet will be your high officials and military commanders and the leading men of Galilee. Don't let him ruin that.

HEROD: Alright. I will. Guards, arrest John, bind him and put him in the palace prison.

Scene 5: John the Baptist Beheaded (Mark

HEROD: And now my banquet guests, I am pleased by the dancing of the daughter of Herodias.

(Ad lib everyone clapping, saying "Yes!" etc to show their agreement)

HEROD: Ask me for anything you want, and I'll give it to you. On my oath, whatever you ask I will give you, up to half my kingdom.

SALOME: Give me leave to ask my mother's advice.

HEROD: You may go ask. *(Salome crosses to a portion of the stage previously unlit with HERODIAS and possibly other woman reclining at their own banquet)*

SALOME: What shall I ask for?

HERODIUS: The head of John the Baptist. *(SALOME hurries back to Herod, kneels and asks politely)*

SALOME: I want you to give me right now the head of John the Baptist on a platter

HEROD: (greatly distressed) I have given my oath before these dinner guests so I will not refuse you. *(to GUARD 1)* Send an executioner immediately. Behead him and bring John's head to her.

Scene 6: Who is this Jesus?

HEROD: Did you do as I commanded last night?

GUARD 1: It is done, my King. The executioner has beheaded John and brought his head on a platter to Salome.

HEROD: What did she do with it?

GUARD 1: She gave it to her mother.

CUZA: His disciples have come. They took his body and laid it in a tomb.

HEROD: And this Jesus; his fame has reached my ears as governor of these parts. What say the people and the teachers of the law about him?

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CUZA: Some are saying that John the Baptist has been raised from the dead, and that is why miraculous powers are at work in him.

GUARD 1: Or Elijah.

CUZA: Still others claim he is a prophet, like one of the prophets of long ago.

HEROD: No. John, the man I beheaded, has been raised from the dead!

Matching game -People in Mark's Gospel Chapters 1-3

<http://www.quia.com/jg/1553653.html>