

## **25 - HEROD'S CONFUSION**

**Luke 9:7-12.**

In what reads as an aside in his narrative, Luke adds a small detail about how Herod Antipas, the Roman puppet king of Galilee, regarded Jesus and his motley group of followers. Herod held modest political authority under sufferance from the Roman governor of the whole region. There was always a strong contingent of troops ready to put down any threat of rebellion. A well-guarded household and a centurion with 100 well trained Roman soldiers was sufficient to exercise this authority. This gave Herod at least some sense of authority to keep his tetrarchy, as Galilee was then called, in relative stability.

Jesus' ministry and his wandering troop of disciples attracted great crowds everywhere they went. It was the most peaceful demonstration of power imaginable. Unlike the thunderous preaching of John, who assailed Antipas for his immoral lifestyle, there was no threat to him or to the Roman government. But this son of Herod the Great had put John the Baptizer to death. Had he risen from the dead, a ghost come back to haunt this petty king for his many gross injustices and murders?

Some rumoured that this was John. Others reported that people were saying Elijah had reappeared. Still others said that one of the prophets of Israel's long past had returned. Being naturally superstitious, Herod was confused. He tried to see Jesus to discover to what he was about.

But this Jesus was no John the Baptizer. He was

friendly, compassionate and had a gracefulness about his teaching that John had always lacked. Herod's curiosity went unanswered, but did not dissipate his fear that a rival had appeared in Galilee. Jesus wasn't wasting his time with the likes of Herod. When the disciples returned with their astonishing reports of a successful mission, Jesus took them into seclusion in Bethsaida. That was a small village nestled in the hills at the north end of Lake Galilee. The first four disciples, Peter, Andrew, James and John, had come from there.

Modern archeology has rediscovered the remains of the village now two kilometres from the lakeshore. It is believed to go back at least 1000 years before Jesus' time. Mentioned in the Gospels more than any other town in Galilee other than Capernaum, Bethsaida had been lost to pilgrims until 1987. Research has discovered that the modern course of the Jordan River and the adjacent lakeshore are not where they were in Jesus' time.

Located on active fault, the river and the shoreline have shifted several times. Quite possibly, the four fishermen changed their business location because of one such shift. Another occurred in 363 CE when a vast rock and mudslide cut Bethsaida off from the lakeshore forever. Animal bones found under the debris indicated that the town was occupied when Jesus was in Galilee.

Despite being in a somewhat secluded locale, the crowds found Jesus. He welcomed them as was his custom, telling them about God's kingdom and healing those who needed to be cured.