

## HERODIAS – AND THE HEAD OF JOHN

**Matthew 14:1 -- At that time Herod (Antipas, son of Herod the Great) the tetrarch (governor of Galilee and Perea) heard the fame of Jesus, 2 and said to his servants, "This is John the Baptist; He has risen from the dead, and therefore these powers are at work in him. --** Others said, "Elijah has appeared; and others: Some prophet of the ancients is risen", Luke. 9:8; Elijah could not be said to have been resurrected, for he did not die, 2 Kings 2:11. During his ministry John had not performed miracles (Matt. 10:41) but tormented by his conscience the superstitious Herod believed that John had risen and that now, in the person of Jesus. And he sought to see him," but as far as we know he did not accomplish his purpose of seeing him until the day of Christ's crucifixion, Luke. 23:1-12.

**14:3 -- For Herod had seized John, and had chained him, and put him in prison** (in the castle of Macher according to Josephus), **because of Herodias, the wife of Philip his brother; 4 For John said unto him, It is not lawful for thee to have her. In** this John fulfills what the angel Gabriel told Zechariah (Luke 1:17), that John "will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah." Not only did he rebuke the Pharisees and Sadducees who were coming to his baptism (Matt. 3:7-10), but he also without partiality rebuked King Herod (1 Tim. 5:21) even though he understood that for that reason the king could kill him.

--- He "said" to her (not once, but repeatedly) that it was not lawful to "have" her (be married to her) because Herod's wife and Herodias' husband were still alive (Rom. 7:2, 3), and other than that, the union of Herod and Herodias was incest. Lev. 18, "16 Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy brother's wife; it is your brother's nakedness"; Lev. 20, "21 And he that taketh his brother's wife commits uncleanness; the nakedness of his brother he discovered; they will be childless."

**14:5 -- And although Herod wanted to kill him, yet he feared the people, because they considered John to be a prophet. --** Luke 3:19 Then Herod the tetrarch, being rebuked by John because of Herodias, the wife of Philip his brother, and all the wickedness that Herod had done." Mark 6, "19 But Herodias lay in wait for him, and desired to kill him, but could not; 20 For Herod feared John, (that is, he feared John's influence over the people, knowing that he might stir up an insurrection), knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and kept him safe; and when he heard him, he was greatly perplexed, but he listened to him willingly. Poor Herod was between a rock and a hard place or worse. He knew that John was a righteous and holy man, and he listened to him willingly, but if his perplexity indicated that he was considering repentance, he did not have the strength to do so, for there were problems everywhere and he saw no way out. He was afraid of John, he was afraid of the people, and most of all he was afraid of his wife.

**14:6 -- But when Herod's birthday was being celebrated** (Mark 6:21, But an opportune day had come -- for Herodias, for she was lying in wait for him, and desired to kill him, but could not, Mark 6:19) **the daughter of Herodias** (and Philip; according to Josephus she was called Salome) **danced in the midst of them, and pleased Herod** (and to those who were with him at table, Mark 6:22), (such indecent dances, with their exotic movements, were altogether, sensual, seductive) **7 wherefore he promised him with an oath to give him whatever he asked.** -- "Those in whom passions and luxury have destroyed the dominion of themselves, in a moment of caprice will say and do what in a moment of judgment they will bitterly regret" (JFB).

**14:8 -- And she, first instructed by her mother, said:** (Mark 6:25, Immediately she hastened to the king, NIV; lest he should have time to change his mind) **Give me here on a plate the head of John the Baptist.** She did not want to run the risk that the king would forget the oath he had taken in front of several witnesses. Herodias wanted to make the most of this golden opportunity to put an end to John's words that so annoyed and infuriated her. She wanted John's head on a plate so that her mother would be sure that her tormentor was no longer alive.

**14:9 -- Then the king was grieved;** -- But it was the sorrow of the world (2 Cor. 7:10). Herod made a grave mistake, but with courage he could have avoided a worse one. There was a way to correct his foolish oath. He still knew that John was a righteous and holy man and that he had listened to him willingly (Mark 6:20). He also knew that if he were to grant the request of Herodias' daughter, such an act would be *murder*. "It can be argued that the way out of the dilemma was to have said to Salome, 'I promised to favor you with a *gift*, I did not promise to commit a *crime*.' Or again, 'I promised a gift *to you*, not to your mother.'" The best thing would have been, 'Now I see that I sinned in making this promise, therefore I retract.' But Herod lacked the courage, humility, and perhaps also the sobriety or clarity of mind to consider such answers. For him, the oath taken in the presence of the guests and the need not to discredit himself in front of them were of supreme importance" (GH).

-- **but because of the oath** (as if not keeping the foolish oath would be worse than committing murder), **and those who were with him at the table**, (the pressure to please evil companions is one of the greatest trials, 1 Cor. 15:33. For this reason, many reject Christ and the gospel.)

-- **commanded it to be given to him, -- 10 And he ordered John to be beheaded in prison. 11 And his head was brought in a dish, and given to the girl; And she brought it to her mother.** "Now they were not only adulterers, but murderers as well. With this crime they silenced John's voice, but what did they gain? Was it no longer true what John told them about his sinful life? What, then, did they accomplish by their crime? They were still adulterers. Now they are more than adulterers, because they added another sin: murder. It was not yet lawful for

Herod to have the wife of Philip, his brother. Moreover, his conscience was more troubled than ever, for he now believed that John had risen in the person of Jesus. Such men die a thousand deaths.

**14:12 -- Then his disciples came, and took the body and buried it; And they went and told Jesus. 1**