



HERODIAS AND SALOME: WORLDLY WOMEN

INTRODUCTION

Among the female characters of the Bible, Herodias and her daughter, Salome proved to be a deadly duo of evil. Through Herodias' adulterous marriage to King Herod Antipas, they both arose to a high position of power and royal prestige (Mark 6:17, 22). John the Baptist's message of repentance and public exposure of their adultery posed an enormous threat to their royal station and sinful way of living. His holy words must have weighed heavily upon the conscience of the king.

Salome's mother, Herodias was the dominating influence of evil in her daughter's life. She instructed her as an apprentice in evil. Under her mother's control, Salome carried out a mission of destruction by willingly submitting to be an accomplice to her mother's secret scheme. They were women who deliberately and consciously devised a murderous plot to imprison and then silence one of God's greatest and anointed messengers. These powerful women used their beauty and seductive nature to influence Herod in ordering the death of John the Baptist.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY VERSE

And thou [John], child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways; to give knowledge of salvation unto His people by the remission of their sins (Luke 1:76, 77).

Names Given to the Women in this Story

- Herodias
Philip's wife . . . *Herod himself had sent forth and laid hold upon John, and bound him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife: for he had married her* (Mark 6:17).
Female form of Herod, which means - heroic. Royal name for the political ruler during the time of Christ. The Herodian dynasty was the most despicable that history has known.
- Salome
Daughter
of Herodias . . . *when Herod's birthday was kept, the daughter of Herodias [Salome] danced before them, and pleased Herod* (Matthew 14:6).
Herodias' daughter is named Salome according to historical resources. Feminine form of Solomon; Greek for *shalom* meaning - peace. Another meaning is - *very shady*. This seems to be more fitting of her character.

SECTION I - The Messenger

In order to fully understand how despicable these two women were, we must first know the godly man they sought to silence.

READ Luke Chapter 1:1-25, 57-64.

1. Who was the ruling monarch (v. 5a)? _____¹

What area did he reign? _____

2. What information is given about Zacharias and Elisabeth's background (vv. 5b-7)? _____

As a priest, Zacharias had the duty of keeping the incense burning in the temple while the people remained outside praying (vv. 8-10).

3. As Zacharias burned incense in the temple who appeared to him (vv. 11, 12)? _____

How did Zacharias react to the angel's presence? _____

4. Zacharias was a man of prayer. Why did the angel come (v. 13)? _____

What name was to be given to his son? _____

5. What would this miraculous birth bring (v. 14)? _____

¹Herod: refers to Herod the Great, son of Antipater, who tried to find and kill Jesus as a young child. The wise men, who also sought the child, did not reveal Jesus' whereabouts to him. Herod, in his anger, was responsible for the cruel and bloody massacre of innocent children in Bethlehem and the surrounding coasts (Matthew 2:1-18).

6. What was he destined to become (v. 15)? _____

What would happen to him in his mother's womb? _____ ²

7. What was God's purpose and plan for this child's life (vv. 16, 17)? _____

John was likened to Elias (Elijah) the Prophet. They both lived in evil times and witnessed strongly for the Lord. His ministry, through the Spirit, of God would have the same success in turning the hearts of the people back to the Lord (I Kings 18).

8. Why didn't Zacharias believe the angel (Luke 1:18)? _____

9. What profound statements did the angel reveal to refute Zacharias unbelief (vv. 19, 20)? _____

What happened to him as a result? _____

The people marveled at Zacharias' silence perceiving that he had seen a vision. After his time of fulfilling his priestly duties, he returned home to his wife. Despite Zacharias' lack of faith, God was faithful and Elizabeth conceived and gave birth to a son in God's perfect timing (vs. 21-25). In obedience to God, the child was named John. According to the tradition of this time, firstborn sons were named after their fathers. We see that Zacharias chose to obey God rather than tradition. John means "God has been gracious" (vv. 57-64).

10. What effect did John's birth have on the people and how far did the news travel of the miraculous circumstances surrounding his birth (vv. 65, 66)? _____

Whose hand was continually on his life? _____

PERSONAL

RE-READ Luke 1:11-20. EXAMINE yourself, how have you been unbelieving like Zacharias?

² Holy Ghost: NKJV - Holy Spirit. The third Person of the Trinity. In the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit would come upon a certain person for a specific work. John was filled with the Holy Spirit even before his birth.

LOOK DEEPER

READ Luke 1:67-79. Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit at the birth of his son, John the Baptist. What did he prophesy³?

Christ prayed to the Father to send the Holy Spirit. How does His presence work in us (John 14:16-18, 26)?

11. What happened as John grew (Luke 1:80)? _____

SECTION 2 - The Message

As time past, Herod the Great died and his kingdom was divided between his four sons. Herod Archelaus reigned over Judea where John began his ministry in the wilderness. Dressed in camel's hair with a leather belt around his waist, John preached a message of repentance. We see that he fulfilled the prophecy in Isaiah 40:3, *The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.* John's ministry would prepare the way for Jesus' ministry to begin. At this time Jesus was living in the city of Nazareth of Galilee.

READ Mark 1:1-11 and John 1:6-9, 3:22-36.

1. What incredible message would John prepare the world to hear (Mark 1:1)? _____
_____ ⁴
2. What had the prophets written about John, the messenger of the LORD (vv. 2-4)? _____

³ prophecy: a discourse delivered by a prophet under divine inspiration.

⁴ Gospel of Jesus Christ: a good message to announce good news, the message of salvation.

What did John do in the wilderness? _____

3. What great move of God was happening in the lives and hearts of the people (v. 5)? _____

4. What was John sent from God to do (John 1:6-9)? _____

Who is the Light? _____

PERSONAL

When we repent we have a change of heart and mind. We turn from our sinful way and begin a new life. This change should be evident to others. What changes have happened in your life and heart as a result of the Gospel message?

LOOK DEEPER

John's ministry was so powerful that it drew a multitude of people from all walks of life. WRITE who they were, why they went to see him, and what John told them. What is said about John the Baptist?

Matthew 3:1-10 _____

Matthew 21:32 _____

Luke 3:4-18 _____

John 1:19-28 _____

The people were waiting expectantly and were all wondering in their hearts whether John might possibly be the Christ (Luke 3:15). Yet John knew his ministry was to point the people to Jesus, the Lamb of God who would die for the sins of the world (John 1:35, 36).

PERSONAL

REFLECT on the circumstances in your life when you decided to follow Jesus. How did a person or persons point you to Jesus? Have you directed others to follow Him?

4. What did John preach about Jesus (Mark 1:7, 8)? _____

What would be different about Jesus' ministry? _____

Through Jesus Christ ministry, the Holy Spirit was given to all believers as a gift (Acts 2:38). Jesus spoke of Him as the Comforter that would indwell His believers, guiding them into all truth (John 16:7, 13). It is through the work of the Holy Spirit that believers can powerfully give the message of the Gospel to others.

5. Jesus then entered the scene coming from Nazareth of Galilee. What did He have John do (Mark 1:9)?

6. What did John see when Jesus came out of the water (v. 10)? _____

7. Who did God the Father declare Jesus to be (v. 11)? _____

LOOK DEEPER

READ John 3:22-36. WRITE the godly characteristics you see in John's life. _____

⁵ dove: symbol of the Holy Spirit.

⁶ Bridegroom: Christ; the Church is the Bride of Christ.

SECTION 3 - Herodias

There was a fear among the Herodian's of losing their status should their evil and perverted ways be known. This family would stop at nothing, nor tolerate anyone who posed a threat to their future. Their wickedness can be seen through the evil actions of Herodias and her daughter, Salome.

The account of John the Baptist's imprisonment and death was recorded in the Gospels as Jesus' fame was spreading throughout the area. Herod recounts the events after hearing about Jesus who he thought to be John risen from the dead. Others thought him to be Elijah or one of the prophets (Matthew 14:1, 2, Mark 6:14-16).

READ Matthew 14:1-14 and Mark 6:14-20.

1. At this time, who was Herodias' husband (Mark 6:17)? _____ 7
Who was she originally married to? _____ 8
2. For what reason did Herod put John in prison (Mark 6:18, Matthew 14:3, 4)? _____

3. What did Herodias want to do to John (Mark 6:19)? _____

4. Why did Herod revere John which caused Herodias to hate him (Mark 6:20)? _____

LOOK DEEPER

What seven sins are abominations to the LORD (Proverbs 6:16-19)? _____

EXAMINE your heart for any of these sins. REPENT and ASK the Lord to cleanse your heart (I John 1:8-10).

⁷ Herod the Tetrarch: son of Herod the Great, also known as Herod Antipas. He was made tetrarch (the governor of one of four divisions of a country or province) over Galilee and Perea.

⁸ Phillip: the brother of Herod Antipas, son of Herod the Great, who ruled the areas of Ituraea, Gaulonitis, Trachonitis, etc. Also known as Herod Phillip the Second.

SECTION 5 -The Fatal Dance

Herodias, knowing that John, although in prison, still posed a great threat to her waited for an opportune time to fulfill the murderous desire already in her heart. When that time arrived, she would use her daughter, Salome. Through the prompting and evil influence of her mother, we will find that Salome played a vital role in the murder of God's anointed messenger.

READ Matthew 14:6-11 and Mark 6:21-29.

1. What event was being celebrated (Mark 6:21)? _____
Who was attending? _____
2. What did Herodias' daughter do for Herod (Matthew 14:6)? _____

3. Herod was pleased with Salome's dance, what did he promise her (Mark 6:22, 23)? _____

4. Who instructed Salome in what she should ask for (Matthew 14:7, 8)? _____
What did she request? _____ 9

John's murder was premeditated. Herodias' manipulation and plan entrapped her husband so that he had no way out; John would have to be killed.

5. What was Herod's response (v. 9)? _____
Why did he command it to be granted? _____

6. What did Salome do with John's head (vv. 10, 11)? _____

SECTION 6 - Ministry Goes On

Read Matthew 11:1-6 and Matthew 14:12-14.

1. While John was in prison, before his death, how did Jesus encourage him concerning the ministry (Matthew 11:1-6)?

⁹ charger: a form of a plate, platter.

2. What did Jesus tell the multitudes concerning John (vv. 7-12)? _____

3. What did John's disciples do when they heard of his death (Matthew 14:12)? _____

4. What did Jesus do when he heard of John the Baptist's death (v. 13)? _____

5. When Jesus saw the multitudes that were in need of His touch, what was His response, despite His grief (v. 14)?

MEMORY VERSE

_____ (Luke 1:76, 77).

Throughout history, evil women, such as Herodias and her daughter, have pursued the messengers of the LORD. Such women are servants of Satan, whose deadly plots unravel before God Almighty, unless they repent, they meet with sudden destruction and eternal damnation.

Empowered by the Holy Spirit, new messengers continue to emerge preaching the message of forgiveness through Jesus Christ the Lord.