

The "Evil" Herodius

Written by admin
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“ On Herod’s birthday the daughter of Herodius danced for them and pleased Herod so much that he promised with an oath to give her whatever she asked, even if it was half his Kingdom. Prompted by her mother, she said, “Give me on a platter the head of John the Baptist. The King was distressed, but because of his oaths and his dinner guests, he ordered that her request be granted and had John beheaded in the prison.” Mathew 14:6-9 (NIV).

According to Mathew 14: 1-12 and Mark 6: 14-29 Herodius divorced her husband (and uncle) Philip the ruler of Iturea and Traconitis, and married as a second wife his half brother Herod Antipas who was the ruler of Galilee and Perea. Herod had also divorced his first wife. Herodius went into the marriage with her daughter from her previous marriage.

John the Baptist openly criticized their marriage terming it an adulterous relationship and declared: *"It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife."* (Mark 6:18). Because of this, Herod Antipas had John the Baptist arrested and put in prison. However he did not have him killed since the people considered John a prophet and he was afraid of their reaction. He himself also feared John and thought him a righteous and holy man. However, his hand was forced by Herodias who must have passionately wanted John dead as revenge for daring to criticize her marriage. She used her daughter Salome’s dance before Antipas and his guests to exact her vengeance. She told her to ask for the head of the John the Baptist as a reward.

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Herodius must have known that Antipas would be too embarrassed to rescind the oath he had made in front of his guests. On the other hand Herod must have been affected by the alcohol he was most likely drinking and Salome's dance which many believe aroused his sexual desires due its sensual nature.

According to some researchers, it could have been the "dance of the seven veils" – a kind of striptease dance, that affected him a lot such that his reasoning was so compromised that he promised Salome up to half his Kingdom in appreciation for her dance.

We learn from this story that John the Baptist did not shy away from pointing out people's sins no matter how important they were. He was ready to go to prison or even die rather than accommodate the king. That is unlike some church ministers and fellow Christians today who find it difficult to point out the blatant sins of members of their congregation especially if they are rich and powerful.

We are also reminded to be true to God's word. No matter what the world thinks, we need to proclaim God's laws on marriage even if others do not like it.

We are also reminded to be cautious about dances designed to arouse physical passions and some of the ways we make merry, because these can distort our thinking and lead to sinful

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actions and consequences. Parents should instil in their children a sense of modesty unlike Herodius who saw nothing wrong with her daughter's shamelessness and even used it as a means to achieving her purposes. Salome's dance caused John's death. Even today similar lack of propriety between men and women cause a lot of problems. We are reminded to beware of our weaknesses which can allow us to be manipulated by others so that we succumb to temptations. We should not get into a situation where it will be too embarrassing to do what is right. Herod feared the ridicule of friends and preferred to let a righteous man die. Christians should be strong and seek to do what is right and not allow others to pressure us into doing wrong. And no matter how embarrassing or painful, we should determine to do what is right. We need to ask God for help and seek his approval beyond that of fellow men and women.

We also learn that even though it appears that evil wins over good in the short term, we should not despair. Such apparent success is fleeting. God will eventually bring the wicked into judgement. Sometimes this happens in this world. Even though Herod's family managed to get John killed, they were later exiled. Asaph, the writer of Psalm 73 struggled to realize this.

"That is what the wicked are like, - always carefree they increase their wealth.When I tried to understand all this, it was oppressive to me. Till I entered the sanctuary of the Lord., then I understood their final destiny."Psalms 73:12, 16-17

We need to appreciate how much more joy, fulfilment and true spiritual prosperity we have in God. Being faithful to God is the only way to true happiness and eternal life.

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