

## Women of the New Testament – Lesson 6: Herodias

**2 Peter 2:10** But chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government. Presumptuous *are they*, selfwilled, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities.

### Did we learn our lesson? Study Questions from Lesson 5 (Mary Magdalene)

1. According to Luke 8:2, what two adverse conditions did Mary Magdalene suffer from?  
*Answer: Evil spirits and infirmities.*
2. According to Matthew 15:19, what defiles a person?  
*Answer: Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts (These are the things which defile a man) .*
3. According to Luke 8:3, what is revealed of Mary's service?  
*Answer: Ministered unto him of their substance (gave all they had).*
4. According to Mark 16:1, why did Mary and the others come to the tomb of Jesus?  
*Answer: Brought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him.*
5. Complete the following scripture:  
**Psalms 31:24** Be of good ***courage***, and he shall ***strengthen*** your heart, all ye that hope in the ***LORD***.

### True / False

**False** Mary had a legion of demons within her (LUK 8:2 – Seven devils)

**True** Mary witnessed the crucifixion of Christ (JOHN 19:25 – Stood by the cross)

**False** The Apostles believed Mary's report of the Lord's resurrection (LUK 24:8-11 – A tale)

**True** The Lord first appeared to Mary Magdalene (JOHN 20:16 – Jesus saith unto her, **Mary**)

**Extra Credit** - In your opinion, are you courageous with the gospel of Christ, and if so, how?

### Lesson 6: Herodias

'She's got the devil in her heart' – The Beatles (1962 – Devil In Her Heart)

Every once in a while, you meet someone who appears to have no conscience or consideration for others – It's all about them. Ironically, they are also typically very charismatic and seem to get everything they want, which is addressed in the next lyric as George Harrison sings 'But her eyes, they tantalize'! There is something about these people that draw others to them, as they demonstrate confidence and bravado, often appearing bigger than life – It is the attraction of the world:

**Matthew 15:19** *If ye were of the world, the world would love his own*

The world uses these powerful personalities as magnets to attract others to the distractions of the world, appealing to our sense of worldly enrichment (wealth, fame, luxury, etcetera), justifying the acts of the flesh (**GAL 5:17-21** – The flesh lusteth against the spirit), as a means to an end (worldly enrichment).

**Mark 10:25** *It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.*

In conflict with the spirit (**GAL 5:17/JAM 4:4**) the Lord warns of the distractions of the world.

A look at the character of Herodias will reveal much about the world in which we live.

## Who is Herodias?

Position - Herodias was a princess of Judea as the daughter of Aristobulus, the son of Herod the Great, born in 15 BC. There was a separation from the throne because her uncle Antipater II (Herod the Great's eldest son) attempted to poison his father, and was executed in 4 BC, placing Herod II in line for the throne. However, Herod the Great divorced his wife (Mariamne II, mother of Herod II) before he died when he learned his wife knew of the attempt on his life and she did not take any action to stop it, separating Herod II from succession.

Setting of this account - Herodias is the current (second) wife of Herod Antipas, son of Herod the Great, the Roman tetrarch of Galilee and Perea. This is also Herodias' second marriage, as she was previously married to Herod II (Philip), who is her half uncle, and half-brother to her second husband. The marriage to Herod II ended in divorce, to facilitate her marriage to her ex-husband's half-brother. The notable fact is that Herodias divorced her husband (not supported by Mosaic law) and was an obvious strategy to gain a position of power in the kingdom.

Additional Family – Herodias has one daughter, Salome, from her first husband (Herod Philip). Herodias' brothers were Herod V (who was king of Chalkis) and Herod Agrippa (the last Jewish king of Judea), which also align with her heritage in Hebrew society as being under the law. This is where the conflicts start – Willful disobedience:

### Mark 6:17-18 – She wants what she wants

**(17)** For 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.

**(18)** For John had said unto Herod, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife.

Every name in the Bible is there for a reason, and Herodias is no exception. This scripture sets the stage for all we will review as we see several key indicators of Herodias' character:

Disobediant and lawless – With no regard for Hebrew/Mosaic law, Herodias left her first husband (Herod II - Philip) and Herod Antipas left his wife (daughter of King Aretas) to form what would be called today a 'power-couple' with ambitious designs.

John the Baptist condemned this union as unlawful:

**Leviticus 18:16** Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy brother's wife: it *is* thy brother's nakedness.

**Leviticus 20:21** And if a man shall lie with his uncle's wife, he hath uncovered his uncle's nakedness: they shall bear their sin; they shall die childless.

The very public couple openly defies the law of God, and shamelessly conduct themselves to force their behavior as acceptable (a social norm) – Which John the Baptist public denounced.

For this, Herod cast John into prison to both eliminate the public conflict (as others who seek Herod's favor would not do so) and to please Herodias, who has a hatred for John, as he is the only obstacle to an all but unchallenged reign.

### Mark 6:19 – Hell hath no fury...

**(19)** Therefore Herodias had a quarrel against him, and would have killed him; but she could not.

The public denouncement of their marriage infuriated Herodias – How dare he criticize me! Does he understand who I am?! With the legitimacy of her marriage in question by this self-proclaimed authority of the law (John is not a legal scholar), Herodias' anger consumes her with the desire to eliminate John, but there is a problem – Her husband:

**MARK 6:20** For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly.

- Herod feared John: He came from a position of righteousness (John was correct) and had public support (**LUKE 3** – Multitudes came forth).
- Herod respected John: He brought the word of God
- Herod heeded John: Observing his preachings, Herod looked to build his image before the people

This was all an obstacle to Herodias in the public image of her marriage and reputation.

This scenario is very much like another, and there is a very real link between the two:

### **1 Kings 19:1-2 – Act 1**

(1) And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and withal how he had slain all the prophets with the sword.

(2) Then Jezebel sent a messenger unto Elijah, saying, So let the gods do *to me*, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by to morrow about this time.

Ahab = Herod: Both feared and respected the prophet of God

Jezebel = Herodias: Both had only ambition and 'self,' with utter disdain for anything in the way  
(see **1 KINGS 16-21**)

Elijah = John: Both the messengers of God – But there is more:

### **Matthew 11:13-14 – A shared spirit across time**

(13) For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John.

(14) And if ye will receive *it*, this is Elias, which was for to come.

The Lord confirms the spiritual identity of Elijah as prophesized by Malachi (**MAL 5:5-6**) to fulfill the prophecy of preparing the way of the Messiah (**MAL 3:1**)

Just as Jezebel sought the life of Elijah, Herodias pursues John – Waiting for opportunity to present itself.

### **Mark 6:22-28 – Relentlessly vindictive**

(22) And when the daughter of the said Herodias came in, and danced, and pleased Herod and them that sat with him, the king said unto the damsel, Ask of me whatsoever thou wilt, and I will give *it* thee.

(23) And he sware unto her, Whatsoever thou shalt ask of me, I will give *it* thee, unto the half of my kingdom.

(24) And she went forth, and said unto her mother, What shall I ask? And she said, The head of John the Baptist.

(25) And she came in straightway with haste unto the king, and asked, saying, I will that thou give me by and by in a charger the head of John the Baptist.

(28) And brought his head in a charger, and gave it to the damsel: and the damsel gave it to her mother.

John in prison and isolated from openly preaching and criticizing their marriage was not good enough – Herodias would not be satisfied until John's body was lifeless, the price to pay for standing up to royalty.

To make matters worse, Herodias takes advantage of her husband's pride (**MARK 6:26** – But for his oath's sake) and her daughter Salome's loyalty (**MARK 6:24** - Went unto her mother) and seized the opportunity to be rid of John the Baptist once and for all!

The testimony of Herodias is a remarkable example of everything that is wrong with the world: Proudful and arrogant (as a royal / aristocrat – Sees herself above others), willfully Disobedient (not accepting accountability to law or responsibility – Denying accountability), loveless (using her own family for gain) and lustful (never satisfied – Always wanting more) – See **2 TIM 3:1-5** for a more thorough description.

Herodias' example is 'Herodias first' – A contradiction with alignment in God as Christ notes the greatest commandments are (**MATT 22:37-40**) to love God, and love your neighbor fulfilling all law and prophecy. The world will constantly bombard humanity with distraction (self) but one must SEEK God (**MATT 7:7**)

**Next Lesson: Mary and Martha**

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### Study Questions

1. According to Mark 6:17, where was John the Baptist?

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2. According to Mark 6:17, Why was John the Baptist there?

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3. According to Mark 6:19, what was Herodias's goal for John the Baptist?

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4. According to Mark 6:20, how did Herod feel about John the Baptist?

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5. Complete the following scripture:

**Matthew 15:19** If ye were of the \_\_\_\_\_, the \_\_\_\_\_ would love his \_\_\_\_\_.

### True / False

### Reference

T F Herod married his brother's daughter

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T F John openly rejected Herod/Herodias marriage

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T F Herodias admired John's courage to speak the truth

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T F The sister of Herodias danced before Herod

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**EXTRA CREDIT** – In your opinion, do you share any traits with Herodias, and if so, what?

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