

Jesus Heard About the Murder of John the Baptist

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that there will be those who will continue to reject Jesus because of their unbelief. In this topic, we will see that Herod gives us a real example of one who continued in his unbelief regardless of what he heard or saw.

In Matthew 14:1-5, we read, “At that time Herod the tetrarch heard the report about Jesus and said to his servants, ‘This is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead, and therefore these powers are at work in him.’ For Herod had laid hold of John and bound him, and put *him* in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip’s wife. Because John had said to him, ‘It is not lawful for you to have her.’ And although he wanted to put him to death, he feared the multitude, because they counted him as a prophet.” In these verses, we see a good example of how guilt affects a person who has committed sin. Herod heard about the ministry of Jesus and immediately thought John the Baptist had risen from the dead. We will see how that guilt affected him each time He heard about Jesus.

As soon as Herod began hearing about the preaching and miracles of Jesus, his first thought was that John the Baptist had risen from the dead. This was due to the fact that Herod had murdered John. Every time he heard about Jesus, it made him wonder if John had risen from the dead. He also wanted to see Jesus perform miracles in front of him. As a result, he’d had a great desire to see Jesus for a long time. Luke 23:8 says, “Now when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceedingly glad; for he had desired for a long *time* to see Him, because he had heard many things about Him, and he hoped to see some miracle done by Him.” We see that the first way that Herod was affected by the fact that he had killed John the Baptist was that his life was controlled by guilt.

Second, we see that Herod was living a life that caused shame. Herodias was the daughter of Aristobulus, the son of Herod the Great. Herod and Philip were half-brothers of Aristobulus, which meant that both Herod and Philip were uncles of Herodias. This meant that in addition to taking the wife of his brother, Herod was also committing incest with his niece. Mark 6:20 says, “For Herod feared John, knowing that he *was* a just and holy man, and he protected him. And when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly.” The fact that Herod did many things to protect John from Herodias showed that Herod knew that Herodias also hated John. He was controlled by shame for his lifestyle because he was living both in incest and had taken the wife of his brother. He knew that John was a just and holy man and knew that the things John said to him were right, but he was unwilling to change because of his own desires so his life had become controlled by shame.

Third, this same verse says that Herod feared John. This makes it clear that his life was also controlled by fear and so, his actions were based on fear. These three things: fear, guilt and shame completely controlled his life. We see that these same three things controlled Adam when he

sinned. Genesis 3:10 says, “So he said, ‘I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself.’” I was afraid – fear. I was naked – shame. I hid myself – guilt. These are the three changes that happened to Adam within his spirit when he sinned. These same three things now completely controlled the spirit of Herod. Every time he thought about John, these three things took complete control of him. That was why his first reaction, every time he heard about Jesus, was to think John had risen from the dead. That was why he was so anxious to see Jesus.

The fear of Herod was not of John. He wanted to put John to death because he did not like to be reminded of his sin. At the same time, Herodias had an even stronger desire to put John to death. However, these verses tell us that Herod feared the multitude. He was afraid of the people because the people considered John to be a prophet. 1 John 4:18 says, “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love.” This verse tells us that perfect love casts out fear. The opposite is also true. A lack of love causes a person to become totally controlled by fear. Here, we see that Herod was living in total fear, because he knew John was telling him the truth.

The fact that Herod was living in total fear explains why he did what he did. Matthew 14:6-8 says, “But when Herod’s birthday was celebrated, the daughter of Herodias danced before them and pleased Herod. Therefore he promised with an oath to give her whatever she might ask. So she, having been prompted by her mother, said, ‘Give me John the Baptist’s head here on a platter.’” These verses show us that Herodias was looking for the opportunity to get rid of John because she was also living with that same guilt, shame and fear. She did not like to be reminded of her lifestyle either.

One day, Herodias saw her opportunity to get rid of John. Mark 6:21-25 says, “Then an opportune day came when Herod on his birthday gave a feast for his nobles, the high officers, and the chief *men* of Galilee. And when Herodias’ daughter herself came in and danced, and pleased Herod and those who sat with him, the king said to the girl, ‘Ask me whatever you want, and I will give *it* to you.’ He also swore to her, ‘Whatever you ask me, I will give you, up to half my kingdom.’ So she went out and said to her mother, ‘What shall I ask?’ And she said, ‘The head of John the Baptist!’ Immediately she came in with haste to the king and asked, saying, ‘I want you to give me at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter.’” Herodias had taught her daughter how to dance in a way that would please Herod and these other government officials in the region of Galilee, especially in view of the fact that they were probably also drinking.

In his efforts to impress all of the other government officials, Herod promised the girl that he would give her whatever she wanted up to half of his kingdom. This was not a true statement because Herod had no kingdom to give as he was a governor under the authority of the Roman government and not the king of a kingdom. As a result, his words were totally designed to impress the other people who were there. The girl had no idea what to ask from Herod. That is why she went and asked her mother what she should ask Herod to give her. This was the opportunity for which Herodias had been hoping. She knew that Herod would keep his promise in his efforts to impress these other government officials because he would bring shame on himself if he broke his oath.

Here, we see that Herodias knew how to get what she wanted from Herod.

We go on to read how Herod felt but what he still did that day. Matthew 14:9-12 says, “And the king was sorry; nevertheless, because of the oaths and because of those who sat with him, he commanded *it* to be given to *her*. So he sent and had John beheaded in prison. And his head was brought on a platter and given to the girl, and she brought *it* to her mother. Then his disciples came and took away the body and buried it, and went and told Jesus.” Here, we see that Herod felt sorry. There are two different kinds of sorrow. 2 Corinthians 7:9-10 says, “Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that your sorrow led to repentance. For you were made sorry in a godly manner, that you might suffer loss from us in nothing. For godly sorrow produces repentance *leading* to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.” Herod certainly did not experience godly sorrow because his sorrow did not lead him to repentance. Instead, he experienced the sorrow that produces death.

That day, Herodias got exactly what she wanted. When a person is driven by fear, guilt and shame, that person will not do what is right. Instead, the person will always commit sin. That was exactly what happened that day. Herod had made a promise that meant nothing because he had no kingdom to give. However, he was determined to keep that promise because of the other government officials that had come to his birthday feast and were celebrating with him. As a result, he immediately commanded a soldier to go to the prison and get the head of John the Baptist. Mark 6:26-28 says, “And the king was exceedingly sorry; *yet*, because of the oaths and because of those who sat with him, he did not want to refuse her. Immediately the king sent an executioner and commanded his head to be brought. And he went and beheaded him in prison, brought his head on a platter, and gave it to the girl; and the girl gave it to her mother.” Here, we see that Herod tried to show that he kept his word and sent an executioner to kill John and bring the head to the girl. She then took the head to her mother.

This is an example of one reason why people will do things they know are wrong and which cause them to experience extreme guilt for the rest of their lives. They are being driven by their fear, guilt and shame, which causes them to be exceedingly sorry. However, they do what they do because they are trying to impress the people who are around them. Luke 23:11-12 says, “Then Herod, with his men of war, treated Him with contempt and mocked *Him*, arrayed Him in a gorgeous robe, and sent Him back to Pilate. That very day Pilate and Herod became friends with each other, for previously they had been at enmity with each other.” Here, we see that Herod and his men of war treated Jesus with the same contempt that they had shown to John. We also see that the actions of Herod and his soldiers changed the relationship between Herod and Pilate. Both men were acting out of total fear, guilt and shame when they condemned Jesus to death even though they knew that Jesus was innocent. They now became friends because they had joined together in doing evil in order to please the Jewish religious leaders.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain why people who join together to do evil will become friends. They do what they do because their lives have become driven by fear, guilt and shame. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children understand these consequences of a sin nature.

