

January 27, 2013

Lessons Learned From King Herod

By Marvin L. Weir

People must be warned today. It is a sin to refuse to repent, but it is also a sin to refuse to warn (cf. Ezek. 33:1-9)! The apostle Paul was pure from the blood of all men for one reason; he did not refrain from declaring unto them the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27). Folks may not accept the truth, but such does not lessen our obligation to make them aware of the truth.

Jesus spoke no greater truth than when He said, “*And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought of God*” (John 3:19-21). The Master again warned, “*If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before [it hated] you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you*” (John 15:18-19). The choice between good and evil is ever before us; we must choose righteousness.

Let us learn from the warning given to King Herod.

Herod was warned of his sin! John was bold to speak the truth to Herod in saying, “*...It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother’s wife*” (Mark 6:18). An adulterous marriage (used in an accommodative sense) will never be sanctioned by God! This was a day that Herod could have chosen to correct sinful matters and repent of his sin, but he chose to ignore the warning.

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Fear alone will not suffice! “*For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy...*” (Mark 6:20), but still could not bring himself to forsake his wicked ways (cf. Isa. 55:7). Fear can certainly serve as motivation to do right, but “fear only” will not save one. The correct approach to the Word of God is this... “*But be ye **doers** of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and **not a doer**, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway **forgetteth** what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and **continueth** [therein], he being not a forgetful hearer, but a **doer** of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed*” (James 1:22-25, emph. MLW). There are countless thousands today who still fear an eternal hell, but such fear does not guarantee complete obedience to God’s word.

Herod was enslaved by another’s opinion. “*... 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). It is as one has truthfully said, “The voice of lust gets the victory over the voice of conscience and of God.”

People are enslaved today by what others say about the Bible or about God. It is still the case that many love the praise of men more than the praise of God (John 12:43). Opinions of men do not matter; it is God's Word that will judge us (John 12:48).

Herod was ensnared by the dance. Herod could have refused to see the dance of his wife's daughter, but he chose to see and the dance "pleased" him (Mark 6:22). It never fails that when one refuses God's warning, he finds it easy to indulge in sinful pleasure.

It was surely the "grace" and "dexterity" of the dancer that pleased Herod! We have warned parents for years about training their children in these so-called "social graces." It was nothing short of fleshly lust that motivated Herod to make his infamous promise.

A promise made only because of excitement is never good! It just may be that Herod had "goose pimples" all over and his heart may have gone "pitter-patter" more than once! He said, "*Whatsoever thou shalt ask of me, I will give [it] thee, unto the half of my kingdom*" (Mark 6:23). As one has observed, "Sin first interests, then excites, [and] then captivates." The god of pleasure and the goddess of passion continue to captivate the hearts of many. As the song says, "Yield not to temptation, for yielding is sin."

Herod experiences the barbs of sin! The request was made for the head of John the Baptizer (Mark 4:24) and Herod "*was exceeding sorry; [yet] for his oath's sake, and for their sakes which sat with him, he would not reject her*" (Mark 6:26). When one sells himself to sin, he becomes the slave of another. The short-lived pleasures of sin now ripen into "bone chilling" demands that one would rather not hear. Too late! The pied piper must be paid his due.

May we be willing to learn from this sad occasion in the life of King Herod. Let us resolve that our allegiance belongs only to God, and Him only will we worship and serve!