"HEROD: A MAN HAUNTED BY SIN"

Matthew 14:1-13

10/17/93

INTRODUCTION:

***Beware of the dominating power of sin!**

A life dominated by sin will be characterized by:

I. An Attempt to Secretly <u>COVER UP</u> the Sin (v. 3-4)

II. Foolish <u>BEHAVIOR</u> and Foolish <u>DECISIONS</u> (v. 5-8)

III. A Sorrow But No <u>REPENTANCE</u> (v. 9a; Mark 6:20)

IV. A <u>CAVING IN</u> Under Peer <u>PRESSURE</u> (v. 9b-11)

V. A <u>GUILTY CONSCIENCE</u> (v. 1-2)

CONCLUSION:

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INTRODUCTION:

"This true account is more incredible than the most bizarre soap opera. It is a story of infidelity, divorce, remarriage, incest, political intrigue, jealousy, spite, revenge, lewdness, lust, cold-heartedness, cruelty, brutality, violence. . . fear" (MacArthur, p. 416).

V. 1

"Herod" - the son of Herod the Great (his father attempted to secure his throne by ordering the death of all male Jewish babies under two years old, in an attempt to kill the *"King of the Jews"* - Mt. 2).

Herod had married the daughter of Aretas, king of the Nabataean Arabs, but on a trip to Rome he had visited his half-brother Philip and was deeply attracted to his wife, Herodias. He seduced her and talked her into returning with him. Herod's own wife discovered his plans, and fearing for her life, she fled to her father King Aretas. Herod divorced her and incestually married Herodias.

V. 3

"For Herodias' sake" - Perhaps the coaxing (prodding) of Herodias helped drive Herod to have John locked up.

V. 4

""It is not lawful" - The law against committing incest - Lev. 18:16 - *"Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy brother's wife; it is thy brother's nakedness."*

John the Baptist's rebuke to Herod shows these facts:

1. God's law applies to all people (kings and pagan leaders included)

2. God's people must be bold enough to tell the truth to anyone.

3. God's people must uphold God's Law no matter what the cost may be.

God expects His servants to preach the truth even if it offends people -

> Eph. 5:11 - *And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them."*
>
> II Tim. 4:2 - *"Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine."*
>
> Isaiah 58:11 *"Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins."*
>
> Ezek. 3:18 - *"When I saw unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand."*

John the Baptist was the first martyr to die for Christ.

V. 5

Herod, being pressured by Herodias (Mk. 6:19), had thoughts of putting John to death, but he could not for two main reasons:

1) John had a multitude of supporters who considered him a prophet (v. 5).

2) John was righteous and guilty of no wrong deserving death (SEE: Mk.

6:19-20)

"John was put in the fortress of Machaerus, located about four miles east of the Dead Sea. It stood 3,500 feet above sea level on a rocky ridge that was accessible from only one side" (Wiersbe, p. 49).

V. 10-11

"He sent and beheaded John in the prison"

1) No one can take our lives until God's purpose for our life is complete (God allowed John to live long enough to see and hear of Christ's miracles and message - Mt. 11:2-6).

2) Even the greatest of saints (Mt. 11:10-11) is not above persecution and martyrdom.

3) God's love is not diminished at all for those of His children who die such a tragic death (Rom. 8:35-37 - *"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us."*).

V. 11

"A charger" - a platter

What a gruesome, inhumane act!

Herodias no doubt thought that she was now free from the stigma of her sin; like many who abort their babies to cover up their shame. Such acts do nothing but heighten the guilt and condemnation.

One writer comments: *"When the dish was brought in with the bleeding head on it, no doubt [Salome] took it daintily in her hands lest a drop of it should stain her [dress] and she scurried away to her mother as if bearing her some choice dish of food from the king's table. It was not uncommon to bring the head of one who had been slain to the person who ordered it, as sure proof that the command had been obeyed."* It is reported that when the head of Cicero was brought to Fulvia, the wife of Antony, that

she spat on it, pulled its tongue out and drove her hairpin through it (cited by MacArthur, p. 422).

John 3:19 - *"And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."*

***Beware of the dominating power of sin!**

A life dominated by sin will be characterized by:

I. An Attempt to Secretly <u>COVER UP</u> the Sin (v. 3-4)

Luke 3:18-20 - *"And many other things in his exhortation preached he unto the people. But Herod the tetrarch, being reproved by him for Herodias his brother Philip's wife, and for all the evils which Herod had done, added yet this above all, that he shut up John in prison."*

Herod feared that John and his popularity might be a thorn in his side and cause him more trouble, perhaps even incite a rebellion. So he put him away to prevent

any politically incorrect difficulty from arising (Josephus. Antiquities 18.5:1-2).

Persecution is on the horizon in this country. As the gulf between the righteous and the unrighteous broads, as the wicked do more wickedly, eventually they are not going to tolerate anything and anyone who might interfere with their abominable lifestyle.

Their goal will be to quiet down those "big-mouthed evangelists"; to silence those who confront the society's wickedness; to shut down churches that oppose homosexuality, or abortion rights.

It's all part of a cover-up attempt.

"He that covereth his sins shall not prosper, but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy" (Prov. 28:13).

II. Foolish <u>BEHAVIOR</u> and Foolish <u>DECISIONS</u> (v. 5-8)

V. 6

Herod was so debauched that he was turned on by his own wife's daughter.

V. 7

Herod swore to give Herodias' daughter anything, even up to half of his kingdom (Mk. 6:23).

V. 8

"She, being before instructed" - Herodias plotted in advance "to have her teenage daughter perform a lascivious dance at Herod's birthday feast. Herodias knew that her husband would succumb to her daughter's charms and make some rash promise to her" (Wiersbe, p. 49). She then would get what she wanted -- John's head!

III. A Sorrow But No REPENTANCE (v. 9a; Mark 6:20)

Herod's sorrow was because of John's righteousness. He had some conscience left, which convicted him that he was about to execute an innocent man.

Herod listened to the truth, but remained unchanged (Mk. 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"*)

The most frustrating thing a pastor does is present Biblical truth to satisfy the religious curiosity of people who have no intention of believing it and submitting to it.

Ezek. 33:31-32 - *"And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness. And lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, but they do them not."*

Being sorry is not enough. There must be repentance. There is a worldly sorrow and a Godly sorrow.

II Cor. 7:10 - *"For Godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death."*

Heb. 12:16-17 - *"Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears."*

Herod's refusal to believe John's message was a foreshadowing of his fatal rejection of Jesus Christ (SEE: Luke 23:8-12).

IV. A CAVING IN Under Peer PRESSURE (v. 9b-11)

So as to "save face" before his friends and officials, Herod's pride would not let him do right.

Herod feared everyone but God.

He feared the multitude, John the Baptist, his wife, and his peers (MacArthur, p. 420).

Perhaps Herod feared being shamed and embarrassed by a woman's nagging tantrums before his guests or being the butt end of their jokes and amusements.

"Although Herod had no concern for principle, he had great concern for appearance. By breaking his word so soon after giving it, he would have been embarrassed in front of his dinner guests, who doubtlessly included many political and military dignitaries" (MacArthur, p. 421).

For Herod to deny his step-daughter Salome's request would give Herod's peers the idea that he was somehow favorable toward John the Baptist. There is no way a lost person will stand up for a man of God while in the midst of anti-God cronies.

So many teens give in to the pressures to conform at school. It's hard to go against the flow; it's not easy to be a minority on an issue; there is a lot of pressure when everyone else is doing it. However, we some Joseph's, Daniel's, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego's!

V. A GUILTY CONSCIENCE (v. 1-2)

Herod was haunted by his remembrance of what he had done to John.

"Because of haunting guilt for having murdered John, Herod was afraid he had come back from the dead to (perhaps) seek revenge" (MacArthur, p. 417).

Although it was the *"fame of Jesus"* (v. 1) that spread throughout Palestine, Herod, because he had a guilty conscience for what he did to John the Baptist, thought he was vindicated by God and resurrected.

Herod's conscience was bothering him and no one could relieve his mental anguish. Instead of repenting for his execution of John, he thought that this one--John raised again (who was really Jesus)--needed to be killed.
Rather than mourning over the terrible sin he had committed and confessing it to God and repenting of it, Herod lived his life int he torment of fear and guilt, like so many today.

People who live with a guilty conscience:

1) Live with a paranoia, thinking that everyone is out to get them.

2) React abnormally (violently, harshly) whenever anyone hits a soft spot, strikes a vital never, or pushes the wrong buttons. No one can get too close to one who lives with a guilty conscience, because they fear you might discover something they want to keep buried.

3) Today, rather than dealing with the gnawing sin God's way (admitting it's wrong, asking forgiveness of the one(s) offended, and turning from it), society is striving to re-define it, justify it, or simply convince themselves that it was not wrong or that right and wrong are relative, there are no black and white issues.

They call good evil and evil good, so as not to live with a guilty conscience.

The Gay's agenda is to promote their lifestyle as being normal and socially acceptable, so that they won't have guilt feelings.

They view as a "bad guy" the one who calls a spade a spade. The evil one is the one who disapproves of homosexuality, who stands

against abortion, who speaks up against sexual immorality.

The only sin today's society is seeing is the sin of intolerance or non-acceptance!

CONCLUSION:

The Hymn: "Only Trust Him" - Come every soul by sin oppressed,
There's mercy with the Lord,
And He will surely give you rest
By trusting in His Word.