

JOHN THE BAPTIST IMPRISONED

Matthew 4:12; 14:3-4; Mark 1:14; 6:16-20; Luke 3:19-20

STRUCTURE

Key-persons: John the Baptist and King Herod

Key-location: Galilee

Key-repetitions:

- Wrong doings of King Herod: married his own sister-in-law (Mat 14:3-4); desired to kill John the Baptist (Mat 14:5); evil actions (Lk 3:19); had John the Baptist arrested, put in chains, and sent to prison (Mat 14:3); was miserable with guilt, but refused to repent (Mk 6:20).
- Potential for good in King Herod: protected John the Baptist from Herodias (Mk 6:19); listened to John the Baptist (Mk 6:20); was sensitive to God's word to the point of feeling miserable with guilt (Mk 6:20).
- John the Baptist condemned King Herod: said it was not right for King Herod to take his brother's wife (Mat 14:3); spoke out for all the evil things King Herod had done (Lk 3:19).

Key-attitudes:

- King Herod's sensual desires for Herodias, his brother's wife.
- John the Baptist's courage.
- King Herod and Herodias' hostility toward John the Baptist.
- Herodias' desire for vengeance.
- King Herod's apprehension to kill John the Baptist.

Initial-situation:

When Jesus began the first year of his ministry, he was unknown outside of the town of Nazareth. John the Baptist was famous and crowds went to hear him and to be baptized by him.

Jesus began his public ministry at the Jordan River when he was baptized by John. Then, in the desert, he resisted temptations from Satan. At the end of the year, Jesus had at least four followers who made some trips with him and his fame was increasing.

Initial-problem:

John the Baptist spoke out against King Herod of Galilee, because King Herod had married his own sister-in-law. John the Baptist told King Herod, "It's not right for you to take Herodias, your brother Philip's wife."

Final-situation:

Each time King Herod listened to John the Baptist, King Herod was greatly confused. Yet, King Herod could not stay away from John the Baptist.

BIBLE STORY

King Herod, the regional ruler of Galilee and Perea, visited his brother Philip in another country. King Herod became infatuated with Philip's wife, Herodias. Herodias left her husband Philip and went to live with King Herod, her brother-in-law.

John the Baptist spoke out against King Herod because King Herod had married his own sister-in-law. John the Baptist told King Herod, "It's not right for you to take Herodias, your brother Philip's wife." King Herod wanted to kill John the Baptist (Mat 14:3-4). John the Baptist also spoke out against King Herod for all the evil things he had done (Lk 3:19).

King Herod added one more evil to all the others; King Herod had John the Baptist arrested, put in chains, and sent to prison. Herodias held a grudge against John the Baptist and wanted to kill him. King Herod wanted to please his wife; he wanted to kill John the Baptist. But Herod was afraid because so many people revered John the Baptist as a prophet of God. King Herod was afraid of what the people might do if he killed John the Baptist (Mat 14:3-4; Mk 6:19-20; Lk 3:20). King Herod was also convinced that John the Baptist was a fair and holy man. King Herod protected John the Baptist from Herodias.

King Herod visited John the Baptist and listened to him speak. Each time King Herod listened to John the Baptist, King Herod was greatly confused. Yet, King Herod could not stay away from John the Baptist (Mk 6:16-20).

GENERIC DIALOGUE QUESTIONS

1. What catches your attention in the story?
2. Is there anything in the story that is hard to understand?
3. Who are the main characters in the story?
4. What problems did the characters face?
5. How did the characters face their problems?
6. How have you faced similar problems?
7. Is there someone in the story who is similar to you or who is different from you?
8. What does the story tell about God?

SPECIFIC DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why did King Herod imprison John the Baptist?
2. What kind of woman was Herodias?
3. What truths can we learn from the problems King Herod and Herodias had with John the Baptist?
4. Today, what unpopular truths could bring persecution for one of God's spokespersons?
5. How could this story help someone face persecution?
6. Do you know people who are struggling with the truth and are perplexed, much like King Herod?

LIFE-LESSONS

1. **Hearing God's word without repenting makes a person miserable.** King Herod listened to John the Baptist and became confused and miserable with guilt (Mk 6:20).
2. **It can cost dearly to say the truth and to fight against injustice.** John the Baptist paid dearly for saying the truth and condemning King Herod and Herodias for adultery. It cost John the Baptist a year in prison and his life (Mk 6:14-29).
3. **The person who serves as a spokesperson for God may suffer persecution from unrepentant sinners who desire to silence the one who criticizes their sins.** King Herod imprisoned John the Baptist in order to silence his criticism (Mk 6:17). Herodias held a grudge against John the Baptist and wanted to kill him (Mk 6:19).
4. **When God's word makes a person miserable, the person has a choice: repent and get rid of sin, or resist God's word further until one becomes hard and more wicked.** King Herod listened to John the Baptist and became greatly confused. He was miserable with guilt (Mk 6:20). There was still hope for King Herod; something in King Herod responded to John the Baptist's speech. King Herod began smothering the power of goodness in himself by his shameful union with Herodias. But he had not utterly smothered his sensitivity to God's word. King Herod refused to repent and get rid of sin when God's word made him confused and miserable. King Herod continued to live in adultery with Herodias. A year later, King Herod unwillingly gave into Herodias' craftiness and had John the Baptist murdered. Two years later, King Herod had become so hardened he could mock the Lord Jesus Christ (Lk 23:11). King Herod, who ended by mocking Christ, could have repented when God's word made him miserable with guilt.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Role-playing Drama:

Tell the Bible story.

Invite a man and a woman to dramatize an imaginary scene between King Herod and Herodias. The time is immediately after John the Baptist's arrest. They are arguing; Herodias demands John the Baptist be put to death; King Herod defends why he can't give John the Baptist the death sentence.