

Weaving the Word

Head of the House

Part 89 – February 11, 2018

Welcome to where we're developing a fearless faithfulness!

Who do you *mostly* fear most: God or man? This is a good barometer of faith.

As faith in God increases, fear of man decreases.



John-the-Baptist was God's chosen messenger, **head of the house of Levi**, and the last true High Priest under the Law. (Lk 1:17; Mal 2:4-7, 3:1)

He came in the spirit and power of Elijah, the lone prophet who denounced and destroyed the 850 false prophets of King Ahab and Jezebel that led Israel astray. (Mal 4:5-6; 1 Kings 18:19, 22, 40)



Jezebel swore to put him to the sword. (1 Kings 19:1-2)

John called everyone to repent, he placed their sin on Jesus, ended the priesthood of Law, and ushered in the priesthood of grace. (Jn 1:15-17)



As head of the house of Levi, John said, "He must become greater; I must become less," (Jn 3:30) fully aware he had thousands of vicious enemies, crouching and watching like hungry lions.



A righteous fear of God made John fearless. Know what the "fear of God" is? According to Proverbs 8:13: **"To fear the Lord is to hate evil."**

Pretty simple and straightforward. **If I fear any person or any group, more than I fear the Lord, I don't yet hate evil enough.**



Fearless faithfulness speaks truth in love in spite of persecution.

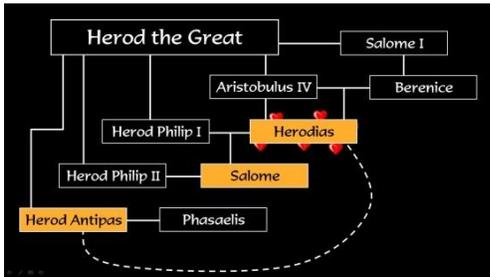
When it was time to shut down his house, ministry, and following, know how John did it? He rebuked King Herod's wife. *That'll do it!*

When John rebuked **Herod [Antipas] the tetrarch [I'll explain in a moment]** because of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, whom he had married, and all the other evil things he had done, Herod arrested John and bound him and locked John up in prison. He did this **because of Herodias**, for John had been saying to him: "It is not lawful for you to have **your brother's wife.**" – Mt 14:3-4; Mk 6:17-18; Lk 3:19-20 NIV

To say the *least!* That's just the *tip* of this iceberg. Herod-the-Great (who met with the Wise Men; and, murdered the baby boys in Bethlehem), was a subordinate or "client king" of Rome.



Herod promised half his kingdom to his son, Herod Antipas; but, reneged and gave it to Antipas' brother, and then split the other half in half and gave one half to Antipas, and the other half to Antipas' half-brother.¹ And, "tetrarch" means "ruler of a fourth".



Now, according to the history books: Herod-the-Great (who met with the Wise Men) had a granddaughter named Herodias. She was the daughter of Herod-the-Great's son, and Herod-the-Great's sister's daughter's daughter.

Herodias married her half-uncle, Herod-the-Great's son, Herod II (a.k.a. Philip I). And, *these two lovebirds* had a daughter named Salome (Herod-the-Great's great granddaughter).

And *she* married Herod-the-Great's son, Antipas' half-brother, Herod Phillip II. Now, Herod Antipas (who imprisoned John the Baptist) got married but fell for Salome's mother, Herodias.

So, Antipas divorced. Herodias divorced.

And, Antipas married Herodias: his niece, sister-in-law, and cousin-once-removed.

Herod [Antipas] wanted to kill John, but he was afraid of the people, because they considered him a prophet. – Mt 14:5 NIV



But he now fears Herodias more than the dwindling crowds.

John's gutsiest move was sending everyone to Jesus, knowing full well they were his *only protection* from horrific persecution. **But, fearless faithfulness steps up when everyone else steps out.**



Not only that, but John was a rock-star! The whole country was going out to him. His ministry was *huge!* But, he just *let it go*.

Fearless faithfulness lets go of its own sense of significance.



Ironically, John condemned Antipas because John didn't fear the rebuke of even the *most powerful*; whereas Antipas *didn't condemn John*, because Antipas feared the rebuke of even the *least!*

And once John is jailed in the palace, and Antipas begins to listen to him, Antipas ends up fearing *John* more than he fears *Herodias*.

¹ Herod Antipas' brother, Herod Archelaus ruled 50% (Samaria, Judea, and Idumea) until 6 A.D.; Herod Antipas ruled 25% (Galilee and Perea); and, Herod Philip II ruled 25% (Gaulanitis, Trachonitis, Batanea, and Auranitis).

So Herodias **nursed a grudge** against John and **wanted** to kill him. But she was **not able to**, because Herod [Antipas] **feared** John and **protected** him, **[for two years!]** **knowing him to be a righteous and holy man**. When Herod [Antipas] heard John, **he was greatly puzzled**; yet **he liked to listen to him**. – Mk 6:19-20 NIV

This is one of the strangest relationships in the Bible. And, **fascination is not conviction**. It **entered his ears, but not his heart**; so, it was powerless to empower him. But **instead of seeking answers, he accepted confusion**. And it'll cause him to fear man over God, and it'll trap him. Because, generally speaking **we always obey the one we fear most**.

If someone's friends dare 'em to touch a hot stove, hopefully a healthy fear of the stove will override an unhealthy fear of losing their unloving friends' worthless approval.

Finally the opportune time came [Passover is less than two weeks away, and everyone's coming to Jerusalem]. On his birthday Herod [Antipas] gave a banquet for his **high officials and military commanders** [which would include the royal official whose son Jesus healed two years prior; and, the Capernaum Centurion whose servant Jesus healed earlier that year. (Jn 4:46-54; Lk 7:1-10)] and **the leading men of Galilee**. [Galilee was one-half of Antipas' half-of-the-half of his father's kingdom] [Antipas is about to be treated to a dance by his niece, his step-daughter, his sister-in-law, and his cousin-twice-remove] When the daughter of Herodias came in and danced for them she pleased Herod [Antipas] and his dinner guests **so much that The [client] king** [of a half of a half of his father's kingdom] **said to the girl**, [who was currently mostly his step-daughter] "Ask me for anything you want, and I'll give it to you." And he promised **her** with an oath "Whatever you ask I will give you, up to **half my kingdom**." [Making it half of his half of the half-of-the-half] She went out and said to her mother, "**What shall I ask for?**" [DING! The opportune time has arrived!] "The head of John the Baptist," she answered. At once the girl hurried in to the king with the request: **Prompted by her mother**, "I want you to give me **right now** [so he can't agree and back out later] **here on a platter** [in front of the guests; so he can't fake it] **the head of John the Baptist**." The king was greatly distressed, but **because of his oaths and his dinner guests, he did not want to refuse her**. So he ordered that her request be granted he immediately sent an executioner and had John beheaded with orders to bring John's head. The man went, beheaded John in the prison, and brought back his head on a platter. He **presented it** to the girl, and she carried it [and] gave it to her mother. – Mt 14:6-11; Mk 6:21-28 NIV



Poor Antipas, he fears John's crowd over his own desires; then he fears Herodias over John's crowd; then he fears John over Herodias; and then he fears the approval of his peers over John. **Living by the leading of our fears is self-torment.**



There's no dance (or any other temporary pleasure) worth giving up any half of any half of your kingdom. It's a trap. **Fear drove Antipas to care more about his status than his soul.**

A year later, Jesus takes Peter, James, and John up a mountain to meet Elijah and Moses; and on their way down, Jesus talks to them about John the Baptist. (Lk 1:17)

The disciples asked him, “**Why do the teachers of the law say that Elijah must come first?**” [Do they *not realize* Elijah comes to shut the door on *their authority?*] Jesus replied, “To be sure, **Elijah does come first**, [That much they get right] and **restores all things** [to the original eternal order of Melchizedek (Heb 5:5-6); *but*]. **Why then is it written that the Son of Man must suffer much and be rejected?** [Because they won’t *recognize Him*] I tell you, **Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him, but have done to him** [John] **everything they wished, [but failed] just as it is written about him** [Elijah].” – Mt 17:10-12; Mk 9:11-13 NIV

Elijah rebuked King Ahab because of his immoral marriage to Jezebel, just as John rebuked Herod for his marriage to Herodias. And, what’s written about Elijah is that **Elijah destroyed the false prophets with a sword**; and, **Jezebel’s wish was to destroy Elijah the same exact way he destroyed their priesthood**. (1 Kings 19:1-2)

But, she didn’t get her wish, because *she* was murdered. (2 Kings 9:30-37)

Now Listen closely: Jesus says that **Herodias did to John** (the head of the house of Levi) **what Jezebel wished: she destroyed God’s true messenger the same way he had destroyed the corrupt messengers**. Isaiah had warned the Levites:

The people do not ... seek the Lord of hosts. Therefore the Lord will **cut off head and tail** from Israel ... in one day. The **elder and honorable, he is the head**; the **prophet who teaches lies, he is the tail**. For the leaders of this people cause them to err ... everyone is a hypocrite and an evildoer ... – Isaiah 9:13-17a NKJ

But, Moses promised the One who perfectly obeys the Word of God, that ...

The Lord will make **you** the **head** and **not the tail**; **you shall be above only**, [in **unmatched authority**] and not be beneath ... – Deuteronomy 28:13a NKJ

And, Moses goes on to warn the *elders who won’t obey God’s voice, that ...*

The **alien** [non-Levite] **who is among you** [John said to them, “*among you stands One you do not know*” (Jn 1:26)] **shall rise higher and higher above you, and you shall come down lower and lower**. [And, speaking as the head, John said, “*He must increase; I must decrease. The One who comes from above is above all. ... He testifies ... yet no one accepts His testimony.*” (Jn 3:30-32)] ... **he shall be the head**, [the Elder and Honorable] and **you shall be the tail** [the prophets who teach lies]. – Deuteronomy 28:43-44 NKJ

Although Levitical authority (from the Law) is cut off at Jesus’ baptism when God anoints Him as our Great High Priest, the religious rulers who oppose Him will continue to teach lies.

Herodias unwittingly played a part when she did to John what John had done to the corrupted Levitical elders and teachers. **The true head of the rulers of the Law was decapitated**.

It’s hard to imagine the fearless faithfulness of John.

But, that’s the goal for every true believer.