

JOHN THE BAPTIST AND HIS MURDERERS.

– MAR. 20. – MATT. 14:1-12. –

"Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life."
– Prov. 4:23.

THIS lesson relates more particularly to Herod and Herodias, than to John the baptizer. It will be remembered that John had faithfully reproved Israel's sins, calling the nation to repentance – in preparation to receive their Messiah and the long promised Kingdom of God. His work, while faithfully done so far as he was concerned, and while not devoid of fruits, was nevertheless a failure as respected the bringing of Israel into a proper condition of heart, that as Israelites indeed they might be prepared to receive Jesus as the Messiah. Had John succeeded, the mission of Jesus to Israel would have been successful; and then, instead of the nation's being rejected from divine favor and overthrown in a great time of trouble, it would have received additional divine blessings, taking the place now occupied by the Christian Church: but, as it was, the words of the prophet were fulfilled, "Tho Israel be as the sands of the sea, yet a remnant only shall be saved." The unready stumbled, were "broken off."

In this respect we have seen that John, like Elijah, was a type or illustration of the entire Gospel Church in the flesh, – in its earthly career.* John himself, however, tho a loyal servant to the Lord and a martyr for the truth, was not a member of the Gospel Church. He belongs on the lower plane, with the overcomers of the Jewish age. Our Lord clearly declares this; "The law and the prophets were until John; since that time the Kingdom of Heaven is preached." (Luke 16:16.) Again he said, "There hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist; notwithstanding, he that is least in the Kingdom of Heaven [Church] is greater than he." (Matt. 11:11.) None could share in the "high calling," nor in any manner be recognized by the Father as members of the house of sons, who died prior to our Lord's death and resurrection, – prior to

the giving of the holy spirit of adoption, whereby all the house of sons are "sealed unto the day of redemption." – John 1:12; Eph. 4:30.

[*MILLENNIAL DAWN, VOL. II., page 251.](#)

John's position in the future, therefore, will not be that of a member of the Bride, the Heavenly Kingdom class; but with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets, amongst whom he was one of the chief, he will be privileged to participate as a member of the earthly phase of the Kingdom, and be one of the "princes in all the earth." And as a servant of the Kingdom he will be greatly honored and blessed and used, in that position to which by the grace of God he was called. And we might here remark that the ancient worthies who will thus be the servants of the Kingdom class, are not thus differently honored from the Church because less faithful than the overcomers of the Gospel age: on the contrary, had they not been faithful they would not be honored at all. Only overcomers will have any part in the Kingdom work; and any part in that work will be honorable and desirable. God desired two classes and hence in his plan called two classes, both honorable and to honorable service; – the one on the earthly plane, the other on the spiritual. There was no obligation to "call" either class: it is an honor to be called and to be used of the Lord in any part of his service; and all thus used will be perfect, each on his own plane, and be perfectly satisfied with his estate: just as fish are better satisfied to be in the water, while birds are better satisfied to be in the air.

John's candor in reproving Herod for living in adultery with his brother Phillip's wife, brought against him not only Herod's ill-will, but especially the ill-will of the woman. It would seem indeed that it was the woman, Herodias, that was the instigator of Herod's entire course toward John. We read, "Therefore Herodias had a quarrel against him and would have killed him; but she could not, for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and saved him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly." – Mark 6:19-25.

Herodias was therefore on the lookout for some opportunity to overcome Herod's sympathy and fear, and to accomplish the death of John, who had now been imprisoned, at her instance, for over a year. Her opportunity came when, at a birthday banquet, Herod, surrounded by his "lords and high captains," and charmed by the dancing of Saloam (the daughter of Herodias), promised her whatever she might ask even to the half of his kingdom. The wickedness and intense malignity of the woman's heart against John, simply because of his reproof of her wrong course, is fully shown by the fact that at her instance the daughter chose the death of John in preference even to a half of Herod's kingdom.

Incidentally, too, this narrative shows how great an influence a wrong-minded woman can exercise. Herod was under her influence to such an extent that he had put away his lawful wife to make room for this wicked woman: her daughter was under her influence so that she was willing to relinquish half a kingdom to fulfil her mother's wicked will. One lesson here set before us is that, while women naturally are more sentimental than men, and under favorable circumstances dominated by good sentiments, yet, if they become evil-minded and vicious, they are correspondingly disposed to go to even greater extremes of wickedness [R2280 : page 94] than their brothers. It is of absolute importance to men that they should not only be emptied of the evil spirit of selfishness and sin, but that they should be filled with the spirit of Christ, the holy spirit: all this is still more important as respects woman, with her more sentimental nature for either good or evil. [R2280 : page 95]

What a suggestive lesson is here for mothers in respect to their power over their daughters either for good or for evil. And here we trespass upon our subject sufficiently to remark that woman's proper sphere of influence is the home – as saith the Scriptures. A true, pure, noble, sensible mother has an almost untellable influence for good or for evil with her husband and sons as well as with her daughters. What a great mistake has been made by some well-intentioned but not

Scripturally guided mothers in leaving the home privileges, opportunities and duties put into their hands by Providence, to go out into the world to attempt its reformation. How frequently the homes of female suffragists and female reformers are neglected, the evil effects thereof falling upon husbands and children. Let every mother feel that in her own family and family connections, and in the opportunities opened to her in the Church, the Lord's family, she has abundant opportunity for the exercise of every talent and grace, and that in a manner fully in accordance with the divine Word and therefore in harmony with the wisdom which cometh from above.

Herod was grieved, "sorry," for the unexpected turn matters took in connection with his unwise offer. We are not to infer from this any heart repentance, but merely that the matter was incongruous to his sentiments and wishes. But proud of his word as a king, proud also of the power, and desirous of appearing omnipotent as possible before his nobles, none of whom probably were of a kind to have any sympathy with John, because also of his oaths, Herod concluded to grant the request, and as a result John was beheaded, and the cruel, vindictive and wicked Herodias received the ghastly present of his head, while John's followers buried the remainder of his body and bore the news to Jesus, his friend.

John's courage and fearlessness in reproving the King should not, we believe, be taken as an indication of proprieties, by the Lord's people. To our understanding John exceeded his mission when he undertook a personal correction of the king. He was right in speaking publicly and boldly against sin in its any and every form; and had Herod inquired of him respecting the subject, it would have been duty for John to have made the statement here recorded. And it is barely possible that Herod did inquire and that John was not a busybody in the king's business, but merely told the truth in answer to an inquiry. This however does not appear from the general narrative. We suggest, however, that the Lord's people would generally best proclaim the truth in a general way without making applications of it to persons in

particular, rulers or others, unless so requested by them. It is, we believe, sufficient, if *principles* of righteousness are firmly held and publicly stated.

However, it is altogether possible, indeed probable we think, that John's course which brought him into conflict with Herod was in some degree *typical* of the course of the Gospel Church in this present time; and of the course of events that may be expected. If it be a type, Herod would represent civil government, and the unlawful wife would represent the nominal church, which throughout the symbolic Scriptures is represented as a woman, Jezebel, etc. Should it prove to be a type by its fulfilment in antitype, the fulfilment will probably be on something like the following lines: **(1)** A partial reunion of Church and State. (This seems to be now in process of development.) **(2)** In such case it would become the duty of the true Church, the forerunners and announcers of the Messianic Kingdom, to reprove the civil powers as well as the nominal church systems, and to declare their union unlawful – contrary to the Word of God. **(3)** The effect of this would pretty surely be to awaken the animosity of both civil and religious powers; but it would draw out specially the animosity and venom of the latter. **(4)** The church nominal, in her false position would be anxious to stifle the reproofs and to destroy the reprovers, and the effect would be that the civil power would be induced to pass such legislation as would restrain the liberty of the faithful ones and hinder them from public utterances; – as John was hindered by imprisonment. **(5)** Jezebel's personal influence being insufficient may subsequently be augmented by the influence of her daughter (united Protestantism) who will be so fully in sympathy with her as to become her tool in the destruction of the most loyal servants of God.

The Golden Text of this lesson is well worthy of being deeply engraven upon the hearts of all who seek to make their calling and election sure: "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life." If the heart, the thoughts, be kept strictly under control in full harmony with the Lord and his Word, all the opposition of the

world and the flesh and the devil will not be able to overcome us. Being filled with the Master's spirit and guided by him, we shall thus come off victors, conquerors and more than conquerors through him that loved us.

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page 95

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