

# Glad Tidings

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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## What led to the beheading of John?

By (Jerry Fite)

**O**n the surface, the answer is clear: John was telling Herod that he had no right to have Herodias, his brother Philip's wife (*Matthew 14:3-4*). Herod had married her (*Mark 6:17*). John's rebuke was central in Herod having the Baptizer executed, but a closer examination reveals five specific factors.

John's "*single mindedness*" led to his beheading. John was dedicated to fulfilling his God-given mission, to prepare the way for the Lord (*Matthew 3:3*). Pointing to Jesus as the lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world, included pointing out the straight paths people were to follow as he pointed them to the fruits of repentance (*cf. John 1:29, Luke 3:3-8, 10-14*). John's single mindedness was not expressed hesitantly. The ESV records the reason for John's imprisonment as, "*because John had been saying to him, 'It is not lawful for you to have her.'*" (*Matthew 14:4*). The "imperfect tense" of the Greek word translated "said" (ASV), indicates that it was something occurring continuously, probably on different occasions. John's mind was securely grounded in God's truth that changes not regardless of circumstances.

Herod's "*doublemindedness*" also led to John's beheading. Herod was of the mind to have John

put to death, but he feared the people because they considered John a prophet (*Matthew 14:5*). Herodias wanted John's immediate death, but Herod did not give in because he feared John, perceiving him to be a righteous man. While fearing the opinions of people, and the righteous character of John, he along with Herodias wanted to kill him. A part of him respected John, while a part of him wanted him dead. He was so divided, that when he heard John, he was "perplexed," yet heard him "gladly" (*Mark 6:20*). The immovable single mindedness of John was entrenched before Herod battling perplexity and gladness while angered simultaneously. James says double mindedness leads one to unstable ways (*James 1:8*). For a while John is kept safe, but Herod's "other mind" would eventually overcome his "better mind."

*Emotional pleasure* also had a part in leading to John's beheading. Herodias's daughter danced before Herod and gazing high-ranking male supper guests as they celebrated his birthday (*Mark 6:21-22*). We do not know exactly the character of the dance routine, but the Greek word translated "*danced*" indicates rapid movement of the body coordinated with the lifting of the feet. Was he pleased with a culturally enhanced dance routine like children might perform (*Matthew 11:17*)? Or, was it a lewd

dance routine of a young woman? Rapid movement and leaping up in the air can go both ways. What we do know is that when she finished, Herod was so emotionally gripped with pleasure that he offered the daughter "*half of his kingdom*" (*Mark 6:23*). After counseling with her mother, the daughter asked for the head of John the Baptizer.

*Malevolent anger* also played a part in John's beheading execution. Herodias wanted John's death, and a convenient opportunity occurred. She did not ask for money, half the kingdom, or a life-sentence for John. No, it was more spiteful than depriving him of his freedom; she wanted his reproving tongue to be silenced by delivering his plated head to them.

Finally, *prideful honor* led immediately to John's beheading. He publicly promised Herodias' daughter any wish up to half of his kingdom. He sealed it with an oath (*cf. Matthew 14:7*). Instead of sparing God's prophet, whom he gladly heard, his pride would not allow himself to look bad before his guests. For the sake of his guests and his oaths, he had John the Baptizer beheaded (*Mark 6: 26-27*).

*Life lesson:* Many hidden issues can rapidly collide leading to the manifestation of a single memorable event!