

Herod and Herodias

By WmTipton

Some assert that because John accused Herod of having his brothers wife, that ALL divorce and remarriage is adultery. But lets look at the facts that will show there is far more to this picture than many want to present.

The first thing to remember is that Jesus had not yet begun His ministry when John started accusing Herod and Herodias. (Luke 3:19-23)

Johns ministry was the beginning of, the transition into, the gospel kingdom
Herodias was the niece of Phillip and Herod, the daughter their own brother Aristobulus, and as such a close kinswoman.....

Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy father's brother, thou shalt not approach to his wife: she is thine aunt.

(Lev 18:14 KJV)

....thus marrying her was unlawful for either Phillip or Herod as she was closely related.

Another sin that was committed was that Herod and Herodias met and conspired to put away their spouses for no good reason, then marry each other. (Josephus XVIII, 5)

Not that God approved of this incestuous marriage to begin with, but this frivolous manner in which they held the marriage covenant exposes just how morally corrupt they were.

Some will try to assert a point of 'while his brother still lived' that it was unlawful for Herod to have Herodias, but we see that "while his brother lived" is a moot point entirely.

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IF Herodias had not been a niece, and *IF* Philip HAD been dead even, Herod STILL could not have her. He was ONLY permitted to marry His brothers widow *IF* she was childless according to Gods WHOLE law. A man is not permitted to marry his brother wife. He could ONLY marry his brothers widow IF she was left childless...otherwise it was unlawful.

Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy brother's wife: it is thy brother's nakedness.

(Lev 18:16 KJV)

"If brethren dwell together, and one of them die, and have no child, the wife of the dead shall not marry without unto a stranger: her husband's brother shall go in unto her, and take her to him to wife, and perform the duty of an husband's brother unto her.

(Deu 25:5 KJV) (not dissimilar to Matt 22:25-28)

The Law does not say..."until your brothers death" as would be the case normally where a man can marry a widow. Gods law is clear...you SHALL NOT marry your brothers wife. Plain and simple. The only exception to this rule seems to be Deut 25:5 above.

Johns use of 'your brothers wife' in his accusation of Herod quite possibly is explained by the law showing that Herod could NEVER have Herodias as his wife, even if she wasn't his niece, simply because Herodias DID have a child with his brother Philip...thereby making it UNLAWFUL for Herod to EVER have her.

Of course, neither was Philip lawfully permitted to have this niece, so who knows what all John held against them?

Now lets approach this from the NEW covenant pov.

My assertion is that Jesus is condemning frivolous divorce....lets see if that fits as well.

Josephus shows us a great deal on this matter in book 18.

Chapter 5

"ABOUT this time Aretas (the king of Arabia Petres) and Herod had a quarrel on the account following: Herod the tetrarch had, married the daughter of Aretas, and had lived with her a great while; but when he was once at Rome, he lodged with Herod, (15) who was his brother indeed, but not by the same mother; for this Herod was the son of the high priest Sireoh's daughter.

However, he fell in love with Herodias, this last Herod's wife, who was the daughter of Aristobulus their brother, and the sister of Agrippa the Great. This man ventured to talk to her about a marriage between them; which address, when she admitted, an agreement was made for her to change her habitation, and come to him as soon as he should return from Rome: one article of this marriage also was this, that he should divorce Aretas's daughter"

FRIVOLOUS DIVORCE !!

He's married, she's married, but these two met and conspired to put away thier spouses for NO reason other than they wanted each other.

Josephus elsewhere also mentions Herodias' own divorce from her uncle/husband Philip. Not to mention the fact that she was his own NIECE, and thus closely related. In both the old and the new covenants this union was morally corrupt and for more than one single reason !

In either covenant these two were in opposition to Gods instruction for marriage and presented NO remorse at all for thier actions. They were led by lust, and put away spouses for no reason at all to have each other. They would have been defying Mosiac law under that covenant, and been going against Jesus own exception in the new. In NO way does their vile incestuous affair NULLIFY our Lord Jesus' own exception.

Jesus was asked by the Pharisees's in Matt 19 (the same event as Mark 10s) if they could put her away 'for every cause'... precisely what Herod was guilty of doing (as was Herodias) and precisely what Jesus was condemning, as the text clearly shows...'For EVERY cause' divorce and subsequent remarriage ... a Jewish epidemic ..

Under Moses this 'for every cause' divorce had been tolerated....'suffered' by Moses. Jesus came to set things straight. Jesus did not end divorce. He condemned frivolous divorce. He condemned the sin that causes divorce.