

It Is Written

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SHAME ON HERODIAS' DAUGHTER

By Russ Bowman

Matthew 14:6-7 says, "But when Herod's birthday was celebrated, the daughter of Herodias danced before them and pleased Herod. Therefore he promised with an oath to give her whatever she might ask."

John the Baptist was killed due in great part to Herod's lust. And Herod's lust was enflamed in great part by the dancing of the daughter of Herodias. It's difficult to see this story otherwise.

Yet more and more I see followers of Jesus involved in such activities, or allowing — and even encouraging or facilitating — such in their children. The physical body is attractive to the opposite sex. Movement in the physical body can and often does enhance said attraction. There is absolutely no denying such. And you would think in a culture that's so obsessed with nudity and sex that Christians would be especially conscious of any appearance or behavior that encourages lasciviousness.

But it's commonplace to see young men and women who profess godliness wearing very revealing clothing; i.e. short shorts and skirts; cropped tops; low cut blouses; clingy, sheer, or tight shirts, dresses, and athletic gear. And wearing such shamelessly — almost defiantly — with the idea that anyone who might object is an archaic prude. Then taking their flaunted sexuality to the dance floor so that they might display themselves in the most sensual of ways. It happens regularly. It happens extensively. And we're often scared to address it because of the brazen ridicule that's directed at anyone who would decry such carnality.

I'm saying it. Think what you will. Shame on Herodias' daughter. Shame on Herod. Shame on us. Holiness demands more than such animal behavior.

Those "Strange People"

By Robert F. Turner

Years ago I shared a seat on the train with a "missionary" returning from work in Alaska. He told me he met some "strange people" up there who thought they could work out their own salvation.

I said, "With fear and trembling; Philippians 2:12."

"No, No!" he said. "I mean they thought they could save themselves."

And I said, "From this untoward generation; Acts 2:40."

This was just too much for the old gentleman; and he sighed, and said he guessed I must be one of those folk. Well, I never did discover whether I was or was not; but I did try to make my point that there was nothing wrong in a faith that could be "spelled out" by the word of God.

It is common to hear preachers boldly assert that "the gospel of Christ must be believed -- it cannot be obeyed!!!" I just recall that Paul said the Lord was coming "in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" (II Thessalonians 1:8). When I hear someone say, "A child of God cannot fall from grace" I remember that Paul told the Galatians who sought justification by the law, "ye are fallen from grace" (Galatians 5:4). Reminds me of the fellow in the jail cell who shouts at the jailer, "You can't do this to me!"

I know that sinners cannot "save themselves" apart from the Lord; but there must be some way

in which this admonition properly applies, or it would not be in God's word. The facts of the gospel can only be believed, but there must be commands of the gospel, which must be obeyed, or this responsibility would not be placed upon us. It is foolish to contend that Christians cannot fall from grace when Paul says some had done so. By the same token, there must be some sense in which we are saved by faith -- for in various ways the Bible says this is so. (Romans 5:1) But it doesn't say "faith only" -- and so we have no right to say so. If there were not some sense in which baptism washes away sins, the Bible would not tell us that it does. (Acts 22:16) Ignoring God's word won't change it.

How wonderful it would be if we all had enough confidence in the word of God to accept it just as God gave it; neither "explaining away" the statements we do not like, nor acting as though they didn't exist. The New Testament relates salvation to 18 or 20 different things. We are saved by grace, faith, works, baptism, hope, -and so, on and on. There is no "only" attached to any of these things. It would seem that common "horse" sense would tell us that they are all necessary ingredients -- fitting perfectly into the divine pattern, each in its place. No "doctrine" that denies any of these matters, or places emphasis upon one to the hurt of another, could possibly be God's truth.

Folk who respect the word of God just "face-up" to its statements and accept them. If this makes "strange people" — then so be it.

How Does The Lord "'Open" Hearts?

By Greg Gwin

In Acts 16 we read: 'And on the sabbath we went out of the city by a river side where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither. And a certain woman named Lyda, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us. whose heart the Lord open that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us.' (vs. 13-15). How did the Lord open her heart? Does He do the same thing to people today?

Does this imply the necessity of a direct action of the Holy Spirit? Is it possible to know and obey the will of God without miraculous divine intervention in our lives?

Look carefully at this immediate context. Notice that they "spake unto the women" (vs. 13), and Lydia "heard us" (vs. 14), and she "attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul" (vs. 14). It seems clear that the means by which Lydia's heart was opened was by the Word of God. There is nothing mysterious here. Rather, it is a demonstration of the power of the gospel (Rom. 1:16), and an example of God's plan for "preaching to save them that believe" (1 Cor. 1:21).

Whatever the Lord did, and however the heart of Lydia was opened, it was the same thing that occurred in every other case of conversion in the book of Acts. Remember, God is "no respecter of persons" (Acts 10:34,35). On Pentecost they "heard" and were "pricked in their heart" (2:37). On that day many "gladly received his word and were baptized" (2:41). Other examples abound in the book of Acts that directly link the teaching of the word with a heartfelt, obedient response (4:4, 8:12, 13:12, 13:48, 15:7, 16:32-33, 17:32-34, 18:8, 19:5).

The Lord "opens" hearts today in exactly the same way He always has — through the preaching of the Word.