

# POWER

"... the gospel ... is the power of God unto salvation ..." (Romans 1:16)

## A PAWN IN A CRUEL GAME (Mt. 14:1 - 12)

by Wade L. Webster

**I**f you have ever played the game of chess, then you know that pawns are the most numerous pieces on the board. Usually, they are also the weakest and most expendable pieces in play. Their function is simply to further the purposes of the king and queen. Thus, the term pawn has come generally to refer to "one who can be used to further the purposes of another."<sup>i</sup>

In the New Testament, we read of a young girl who became a pawn in a cruel game. Salome, the daughter of Herodias, was used by her mother to seduce Herod the king and to slay John the baptizer (Mt. 14:6-9; Mk. 6:21-28). Matthew records:

At that time Herod the tetrarch heard of the fame of Jesus, And said unto his servants, This is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead; and therefore mighty works do shew forth themselves in him. For Herod had laid hold on John, and bound him, and put him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife.

For John said unto him, It is not lawful for thee to have her. And when he would have put him to death, he

feared the multitude, because they counted him as a prophet. But when Herod's birthday was kept, the daughter of Herodias danced before them, and pleased Herod. Whereupon he promised with an oath to give her whatsoever she would ask.

And she, being before instructed of her mother, said, Give me here John Baptist's head in a charger. And the king was sorry: nevertheless for the oath's sake, and them which sat with him at meat, he commanded it to be given her.

And he sent, and beheaded John in the prison. And his head was brought in a charger, and given to the damsel: and she brought it to her mother. And his disciples came, and took up the body, and buried it, and went and told Jesus (Mt. 14:1-12).

Mark's record offers a few additional details that we will note as we proceed in our study. Following our examination of the story, we will make a timely, modern application.

### Herod's Party

The occasion under consideration in our study was Herod's birthday (Mt. 14:6; Mk. 6:21). Anyone who was anyone in Herod's cabinet was there (Mk. 6:22).

It seems clear from the beginning that Herodias' hand was in the party. Perhaps, it was even her suggestion. Whatever the case, Herod's birthday presented a convenient time for her to exact revenge on John the baptizer (Mk. 6:21).

Herodias had a quarrel against John because he had condemned her adulterous marriage to Herod (Mk. 6:17-19). She had wanted to kill John for some time, but had been unable to do so because Herod stood in her way. Herod hesitated to fulfill Herodias' desire because he feared both the people and John (Mt. 14:5; Mk. 6:20).

To pacify his wife, Herod did place John in prison (Mt. 14:3; Mk. 6:17). However, prison wasn't enough for Herodias. She wanted John dead. To be specific, she wanted his head on a silver platter (Mt. 14:8). To get her way, Herodias used her own daughter, who was but a damsel or teen at the time, to seduce

*Continued on page 2*

# A PAWN IN A CRUEL GAME (Mt. 14:1 - 12)

*Continued from page 1*

Herod (Mk. 6:22).

## Herod's Passion

No doubt, Herodias knew her husband's weaknesses and how to exploit them better than anyone else. She must have anticipated what would happen when her daughter danced before him. After all, she knew that Herod had adulterous eyes (2 Pet. 2:14; Mt. 5:28). He had demonstrated as much by his involvement with her (Mt. 14:3; Mk. 6:17).

Everything went off as planned. When Salome danced before Herod, he melted like butter before a hot knife (cf. Prov. 25:28). Matthew and Mark both record that the dancing "pleased" the immoral monarch (Mt. 14:6; Mk. 6:22). The Greek word translated as *pleased* carries with it the idea of exciting emotion.<sup>ii</sup> The word used here is probably from another Greek word which means "to weigh anchor" or to "carry away."<sup>iii</sup> In other words, Salome's dancing excited Herod and carried him away.

Herod lifted his moral anchor, which was light at best, and set sail on the stormy sea of lust (Mt. 5:28). George Bernard Shaw correctly defined the modern dance as "the vertical expression of a horizontal desire" set to music.

## Herod's Promise

The full measure of how far Herod's thoughts had sailed is seen in what he offered to give

Salome up to half his kingdom (Mt. 14:7; Mk. 6:23). The excessive promise that Herod made further reveals the unbridled passion that was within him. Herod had lost his head to lust. He had made a promise that he would soon regret.

At the instruction of her mother, Salome quickly requested the head of John the baptizer on a platter (Mt. 14:8; Mk. 6:24-25). No doubt, Salome made the request while Herod was still inflamed with passion and while the guests were still present to ensure that he did not change his mind.

## Herod's Pain

Herod was far from a good man. He was given to all kinds of sinful excesses. However, his conscience was still operational.

He had not lost all sensitivity to right and wrong (1 Tim. 4:2). He was evidently not "past feeling" (Eph. 4:19), because he was "exceeding sorry" about the promise he had made to Salome (Mt. 14:9-10; Mk. 6:26). Although he was sorry that he had made the promise, he was not sorry enough. He still fulfilled Salome's request (Mt. 14:9; Mk. 6:26). John lost his head so that Herod could save face.

For some time after John's death, Herod continued to be haunted by his actions. The context reveals that when Herod heard of the fame of Jesus and the mighty works that He did, he feared that it was John the baptizer come back from the dead (Mt. 14:1-2; Mk. 6:14-16). Herod's conscience was still bothering

*Continued on page 4*

## GREAT CHARACTER STUDIES

**Moses: The meekest man in all the land** (2010) - \$16.00

plus \$3.00 S & H.

**Simon Peter: Who Walked On Water With Feet Of Clay** (2009) -

\$12.00, plus \$3.00 S & H.

**David: The Man Who Had The Heart To Be King** (2008) - \$12.00,

plus \$3.00 S & H.

These books are also available on CD. The books can be purchased individually on CD for \$10.00, plus \$3.00 S & H. However, for \$20.00, plus \$3.00 S & H, you can have all the past lectureship books on CD, including the three listed above (18 books in all).

### Great Listening

All past lectureships are available on Mp3s.

Individual years can be purchased for \$10.00, plus \$3.00 S & H.

All eighteen years can be purchased for \$100.00, plus \$3.00 S & H.



# POWER

March, 2011  
Volume Twenty-One, Number Three



Deuteronomy 5:32

Wade Webster, Editor

POWER is a monthly publication  
overseen by the elders of  
the Southaven church of Christ,  
Southaven, Mississippi.



SUBSCRIPTION TERMS (USA):

Free Upon Request

Donations toward offsetting the cost of  
publishing POWER are gladly accepted  
and much appreciated.



Phone (662) 393-2690

FAX (662) 342-7152

E-mail: shavenpreacher@gmail.com

VISIT OUR WEB SITE:

www.southavencoc.org



# POWER

P.O. Box 128  
SOUTHAVEN, MS 38671  
RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

## A PAWN IN A CRUEL GAME (MT. 14:1 - 12)

*Continued from page 2*

him.

I have related the story of Herod, Herodias, Salome, and John the baptizer to make a special plea to our young people. I know that there is a special day approaching for you a time of celebration. I know that a special party has been planned and that you have been invited to come. Like a birthday, this celebration marks the passing of time. It means that you are getting older and that high school is nearing completion. Of course, I am speaking of your prom. I am convinced that the prom is a time of special temptation. Like Herodias, Satan is seeking to use the occasion to get you to do his will (Lk. 22:31; 2 Cor. 2:11; Eph. 6:11).

Satan knows that passions run strong in you right now and he wants to seduce you through youthful lusts (2 Tim. 2:22). Unlike Herod, you must flee fornication (1 Cor. 6:18) and keep yourself pure (1 Tim. 5:22). You must actively resist Satan and avoid the enticement of lust (Jam. 1:13-15; 4:7; 1 Pet. 5:8)

You must learn from Herod not to make foolish promises. You must not promise to go to the prom. If you have already promised, you must not let pride keep you from admitting your mistake. Whatever the cost of doing right, it is worth paying (2 Chron. 25:1-9; Mt. 16:26). Dancing is lasciviousness and it will cost you your soul (Gal. 5:19-21). By definition, lasciviousness is "indecent bodily movements" and "the unchaste handling of males and females."<sup>iv</sup>

Young people, I hope that you have a conscience that is still operational. I hope that your conscience is not past feeling. Please don't do that which violates God's word and will harden your heart. Remember your Creator in the days of your youth (Eccl. 12:1). Rejoice in your youth, but don't forget that you will one day have to give an account of your actions to God (Eccl. 11:9-10).

- 
- i **Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary.** Springfield, Massachusetts: G. & C. Merriam Company, 1973, p. 841-42.
  - ii Strong, James E., **Greek Dictionary of the New Testament.** Gordonsville, TN: Dugan Publishers, Inc., p. 15, #700.
  - iii *Ibid.*, p. 8, #142.
  - iv Thayer, Joseph Henry, **A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament.** Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1977, p. 79, #766.

---

Non-Profit  
Organization  
U. S. Postage  
PAID  
Southaven, MS  
Permit No. 24

---