

The highest regardeth. Eccles. 5. 8.

2. *Rashness.* Ask of me. v. 22.

Death and life. . . tongue. Prov. 18. 21.

Be not rash with thy mouth. Eccles. 5. 2.

3. *Cowardice.* For their sakes. v. 26.

Fear of man. . . snare. Prov. 29. 25.

Fear not them which kill. Matt. 8. 28.

III. HERODIAS THE QUEEN.

1. *Sensuality.* Philip's wife. v. 17.

Works of the flesh. Gal. 5. 19.

The lust of the flesh. 1 John 2. 16.

2. *Hatred.* A quarrel. v. 19.

Hateth. . . is a murderer. 1 John 3. 15.

Wrath. . . be put away. Eph. 4. 31.

3. *Cruelty.* The head. v. 24.

Habitations of cruelty. Psal. 74. 20.

Tender mercies. . . cruel. Prov. 12. 10.

EXPLANATORY AND PRACTICAL NOTES.

The third lesson for January presented John as the witness of Jesus in his opening ministry. The second lesson for June presents John as a *martyr* for Jesus—a faithful witness, sealing his testimony with his blood. This is a lesson full of sharp contrasts—Herod and John, Herodias and John, Salome and John. 1. The career of JOHN had been remarkable from many points of view. It closely fulfilled certain notable prophecies (Isa. 40. 3; Mal. 3. 1; Matt. 3. 3), and had been announced by an angel (Luke 1. 11-20). Of priestly pedigree, of pious parentage, John had come as a faithful preacher of righteousness. He was a man of abstinent habit, of large spiritual endowment, of heroic courage, and of lowliest humility. 2. HEROD ANTIPAS is almost as plainly set forth in the gospels as is John. For his history we must turn to other authorities, but the glimpses of him given by the sacred writers make plain certain characteristics. He had a knowledge of and respect for truth; he revered justice and integrity. But he had a guilty conscience, which had been aroused by John's bold statements. He had a superstitious dread of consequences—knew that to live in sin was to bring down wrath and ruin. He tried at first to conciliate both John and his own conscience by "doing many things;" but the ruling force of his life mastered him. With all his superstitious fear and his reverence, his ideal goodness, and resolutions, and occasional attempts at right living, he was a slave to luxury and licentiousness. Herod's murder of John and his own ultimate ruin were fruits that grew from his selfish character. 3. HERODIAS was a wicked woman, licentious and unscrupulously ambitious; but this at least can be said in her favor—she did not desert Herod at his downfall. 4. SALOME was a flippant, senseless pet of a degenerate society.

Verse 14. *King Herod heard of him.* Herod Antipas, the tetrarch or king of Galilee and Perea, heard of Jesus, who, as we learned in our last lesson, was now traveling throughout Galilee. One of Herod's capitals was Tiberias, on the Sea of Galilee, and since our Lord's name was spread abroad rumors of his words and works came thither to Herod's court. Herod Antipas was a typical Eastern despot of great pretension, small ability, weak will, and lavish expenditures—a "bundle of petty vices." He said. To his courtiers. (See the account in Matthew.) *That John the Baptist was risen from the dead.* Herod had murdered John, and was haunted by remorse. (See note on verse 21.) *Therefore mighty works do show forth themselves in him.* Revised Version: "Therefore do these powers work in him." Herod imagined that John had come back to life clothed with new and dreadful powers. No wonder he was terrified. Herod was a Sadducee, and denied the existence of the soul after death; but a guilty conscience is stronger than a creed.

15. Elias. The Greek form of Elijah, whose return to earth had been foretold by Malachi. John had fulfilled this prophecy. *It is a prophet.* A third explanation. Jesus must be a new prophet sent from God after a silence of four hundred years. *Or as one of the prophets.* A miracle worker whose powers rivaled the great prophets of the past. All these various explanations appear to have been made to quiet Herod's conscience, but that was not so easily done.

16. It is John, whom I beheaded; he is risen. The ingenious suggestions of the courtiers all fail to allay the pangs of a conscience which was "a thousand swords."

17. Herod himself. For personal reasons, without the complicity of priests or Pharisees. *Bound him in prison.* Thrust him into a huge building—fortress, dungeon, and palace in one. *For Herodias' sake.* Herodias desired John's death because he had censured her sinful relations with Herod. Partly to appease her and partly to preserve John's life Herod had imprisoned him. Mark writes with the inexorableness of

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