

Mark 6:19

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Therefore Herodias had a quarrel against him, and would have killed him; but she could not:

Analysis

Therefore Herodias had a quarrel against him, and would have killed him; but she could not. Herodias's response to prophetic rebuke reveals hardened opposition to God's word. 'Herodias had a quarrel against him' (ἡ δὲ Ἡρωδιάς ἐνεῖχεν αὐτῷ, hē de Hērōdias eneichen autō) means she nursed a grudge, held resentment—not momentary anger but sustained hostility. The verb ἐνέχω (enechō) indicates persistent, intense opposition. Unlike Herod who felt conflicted (v. 20), Herodias harbored unambiguous hatred for John because he exposed her sin and threatened her position.

'Would have killed him; but she could not' (ἤθελεν αὐτὸν ἀποκτεῖναι, καὶ οὐκ ἠδύνατο, ēthelen auton apokteinaí, kai ouk ēdynato) reveals murderous intent thwarted by circumstances—she wanted John dead but lacked power to execute him directly. Her husband Herod protected John (v. 20), preventing immediate murder. This set up the cunning plot (vv. 21-28) where she manipulated circumstances to achieve her deadly goal. Herodias exemplifies those who, confronted with sin, harden rather than repent—doubling down on rebellion rather than submitting to divine authority. Her trajectory warns: persistent resistance to God's word leads to deeper darkness and greater judgment.

Historical Context

Herodias was granddaughter of Herod the Great, making her marriage to her uncle (Herod Antipas) both incestuous by biblical standards and politically

motivated—Herodian dynasty intermarried to consolidate power. She divorced her first husband (violating Jewish norms where men, not women, initiated divorce) to marry Antipas, showing her ambitious nature and disregard for tradition. Ancient sources (Josephus) confirm she was domineering personality who influenced Herod's decisions. Her manipulation of Herod through her daughter (vv. 22-25) demonstrates political cunning. Herodias's grudge against John mirrors Jezebel's hatred of Elijah (1 Kings 19:1-2)—both powerful women opposed prophets who condemned their sins. The parallel isn't coincidental; John's ministry deliberately evoked Elijah (Malachi 4:5; Matthew 17:11-13). Women in ancient Mediterranean world typically had limited direct political power but wielded significant influence through sexual relationships with powerful men—Herodias used this influence destructively. Early church saw Herodias as warning: unrepentant sin grows more entrenched when confronted by truth, producing either repentance or hardened resistance.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does Herodias's deepening hostility when confronted with sin illustrate the dangerous trajectory of persistent unrepentance?
2. What does her nursing a grudge against John teach about how pride and ambition resist prophetic correction?

Interlinear Text

ἡ	δὲ	Ἡρωδιάς	ἐνεῖχεν	αὐτὸν	καὶ	ἤθελεν
G3588	Therefore	Herodias	had a quarrel	against him	and	would
	G1161	G2266	G1758	G846	G2532	G2309
αὐτὸν	ἀποκτεῖναι	καὶ	οὐκ	ἠδύνατο·		
against him	have killed	and	not	she could		
G846	G615	G2532	G3756	G1410		

Additional Cross-References

Ecclesiastes 7:9 (Parallel theme): Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry: for anger resteth in the bosom of fools.

1 Kings 21:20 (Parallel theme): And Ahab said to Elijah, Hast thou found me, O mine enemy? And he answered, I have found thee: because thou hast sold thyself to work evil in the sight of the LORD.