

Salome

The Woman Whose Dancing Meant Death

Scripture References-Matthew 14:6-11; Mark 6:22-28

Name Meaning-Salome is the feminine form of Solomon, and according to Wilkinson, is the Greek form in shalom meaning "peace." Cruden, however, says that Salome implies, "very shady," which is truer of the debased character of the daughter of Herodias-which was indeed shady, morally. The New Testament does not name her. It is Josephus the Jewish historian who identifies her as Salome.

Family Connections-She was the daughter of Herodias by her first husband, Herod Philip, a son of Herod the Great. Josephus tells us that Salome was married first to Philip the tetrarch, and afterward to Aristobulus, king of Chalcis, the grandson of Herod, and brother of Agrippa.

For King Herod's birthday, Salome entertained him and his friends with a dance. Her dance was far from demure, though. To please her stepfather, she slipped into something slinky and weaved her way around the men. Kitto, the eminent expositor tells us that, "In the age of Herod, dancing was exceedingly rare and almost unheard of, and therefore the condescension of Salome, who volunteered to honour that monarch's birthday by exhibiting her handsome person as she led the mazy dance in the saloons of Machaerus, felt it to be a compliment that merited the highest reward." Made happy by her dance, the king offered to indulge Salome

and grant her one request. Salome, on her own, may have wished for any number of things-perhaps a feather bed or a new pair of sandals or a easel and a set of paints. But with her scheming mother Herodias at her side, Salome asked for something terrible. Herodias, aware of the king's naïve generosity, suggested to Salome that she ask for the head of John the Baptist on a platter. A adolescent girl would surely have recoiled at the thought, and yet she approached the king with this request. Regretting his offer, the king, who was fond of John, kept his promise and had the prophet executed. Though Salome's participation in this wickedness was perhaps at first unwitting, by the end she too was complicit. Her story reminds us that it is easy to acquiesce to evil when we're not vigilant. Had she even been wrapped up in herself and selfishly asked for a new summer dress, neither would John have been killed nor would Herod have lost his kingdom. We must be alert to the casualness with which evil enters and to guard against it. In this case, the honorable act is not to "honor" one's mother. We ought to honor authority by doing what is faithful and good.