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**Text: Matthew 14:1-12**  
**Title: Rejection in Action!**

Intro: Christian ministry is not without challenges. The ministry of Jesus Christ was challenged by the kingdoms of this world. The ministry of Jesus was challenged when Jesus was accused of violating the Sabbath day according to Matthew 12:1-14. The ministry of Jesus was challenged according to Matthew 12:22-37 when the Pharisees accused Him of operating by Satanic power. Jesus was challenged in ministry according to Matthew 12:46-50 by unbelieving family members. He was challenged in Matthew 13:53-58 when He went to His hometown of Nazareth where His teaching offended the people and they rejected Him.

In Matthew 14 the challenge of ministry continues. Here we see how the kingdom of heaven is opposed by the kingdoms of the world. Both John and Jesus preached, "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." The kingdoms of the world saw their announcement of the kingdom of heaven as a threat. Being threatened by the kingdom of heaven, the kingdoms of the world set themselves against the kingdom of heaven. Jesus taught that the kingdom of heaven increases despite being countered and challenged. Violent opposition cannot stop the kingdom of heaven from being extended, exalted, and illustrated in the earth.

Verses 1-2 say, "*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 show forth themselves in him.*"

The news concerning Jesus' mighty works spread, Herod heard about Jesus and His miraculous powers. This was Herod Antipas, one of the sons of Herod the Great. Herod the Great killed the babies of Bethlehem according to Matthew 2:16. Herod Antipas was a tetrarch, which means "ruler of a fourth part." Herod ruled a fourth part of Palestine. He ruled over Galilee and Perea. Being ruler of Galilee, John the Baptist was one of his subjects.

The death of John the Baptist happened at least a year before Herod Antipas heard about the miraculous works of Jesus. Hearing about the works of Jesus, Herod thought that Jesus was a resurrected John the Baptist.

What caused Herod to put John the Baptist to death?

- I. **Sacred Declaration:** Truth is not always received with gladness. There are times sharing God's word will get you in trouble with man. Such was the case with John the Baptist. John publicly reproached Herod, which means that he spoke truth to power. John courageously confronted Herod. John was thrown in prison for telling Herod that he was in violation of God's law. Herod and Herodias' marriage was unlawful because God still considered Herodias to be Philip's wife. Notice verse 3 refers to Herodias as "the wife of his brother Philip." Now this Philip is not Herod's half-brother Philip the Tetrarch, but another half-brother by one of his father's other ten wives. This is Herod Philip who had no rule. Herod Antipas had met Herodias on his way to Rome, he seduced her; they then plotted to divorce their spouses and marry each other. That would move her up into the position of being the wife of a Tetrarch,

one of Rome's puppet rulers. She divorced Herod Philip and he divorced the daughter of Aretas, King of the Nabataeans to whom he was married.

In addition, their relationship was unlawful because it was against the Mosaic Law. Leviticus 18:16 and 20:21 forbids a man from marrying his brother's wife with the exception of raising children to a deceased childless brother, by levirate marriage (Deuteronomy 25:5). However, not only was Philip not dead, but Philip and Herodias had a child, Salome.

John told Herod that it was unlawful for him to have Herodias. It was incestuous. Herodias was the daughter of Herod's half-brother Aristobulus. Herodias was Herod's niece which again brought them under the condemnation of the Mosaic Law (Leviticus 18:14).

John's sacred declaration was not received by Herod, because Herod was not a Jew. Herod had no to very little knowledge of the Mosaic law. Ephesians 2:11-12 says, ***"Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world."***

John's rebuke resulted in Herod and Herodias wanting to kill John the Baptist, but since they feared the reaction of the Jews, Herod threw John in prison.

**II. Sensual Dancing:** verse 6 says, ***"But when Herod's birthday came, the daughter of Herodias danced before them and pleased Herod."*** This was not a birthday celebration as we think of today. Birthday celebrations in that age were entirely gentile and pagan. The Jews considered them shameful. It was common for Roman nobles like Herod to hold birthday parties in which gluttony, excessive drinking, erotic dancing, and sexual indulgence were normal activities.

From the Greek, Robertson describes Salome's dance as "some kind of rapid motion...a shameful display of lewd dancing"(Robertson's Word Pictures). Salome danced to arouse fleshly passions. "Because of its physical appeal, dance lends itself to erotic purposes and has been practiced to these ends by both men and women." - Encyclopedia Britannica, "The Art of Dance".

Salome behavior is unbecoming of a Christian woman. She was not shameface. Christian women are to possess a sense of shamefacedness. In other words, Christian women are to have a sense of propriety, sense of what is proper, a sense of simplicity, a sense of modesty.

1 Timothy 2:9 says, ***"I also want the women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, adorning themselves, not with elaborate hairstyles or gold or pearls or expensive clothes, but with good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship God."***

Salome lacked a sense of shamefacedness, and her mother lacked a sense of shame. Herodias was so hate filled, vengeful, and immoral that she had no shame about sending her daughter in to perform a seductive dance and become eyed by these drunk and lusty men as a part of her plan to have John the Baptist killed.

Herod, Herodias, and Salome's behavior reveal the darkness of that day. The immorality of that day that opposed the preaching of John and Jesus. Jesus is revealing to us what is about to happen to Him for preaching against the darkness of His day. Not only was John executed, but Jesus would be executed by the same wicked government.

Salome so delighted Herod that he foolishly promised her anything she wanted. Fleshly delight can lead to foolish promises.

- III. Sin Deceives:** Sin is like a spider that weaves a web of guilt...one strand at a time! Herod was still doing wrong, now lusting after Herodias' daughter. And he stepped into the trap. [The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life] His passions led to pride, and he was trapped by his own pride. Herod being pleased promised to give Salome whatever she asked (verse 7). According to verse 8, Salome was prompted by her mother. Salome did not ask for the kingdom but for the head of John the Baptist (Verse 8). Herod made the promise and regretted it. He had to keep his promise because he made the promise in front of the royal and prominent guests. So, he sent the executioners to the prison to behead John the Baptist. The head of a righteous and holy man was brought on a platter and given to Salome. Salome gave John's head to her mother (Verse 9-11).

