



**FAMILY LIFE BAPTIST CHURCH**

# **“The Biblical Design of Gender, Part 78”**

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***Informed. Insightful. Intelligent.***



### The Biblical Design of Gender, Part 78

#### Mark 6:17–18

**17 For Herod himself had sent and laid hold of John, and bound him in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife; for he had married her.**

**18 Because John had said to Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife."**

We attend Church to obtain the mind of Christ, meaning, to have the Bible illuminated in our minds so that we can clearly understand the principles that Jesus taught and base our daily personal decisions on those principles.

We come to Church because we want to be obedient to the Bible, which is the doctrine of Jesus Christ, in an informed, insightful and intelligent manner.

Our takeaway point in this series on the Biblical Design of Gender is that God has designed man as the cooperative coalition of husband and wife so that man can successfully achieve the objective that God has given us to exercise dominion over the earth, developing wisdom and knowledge in preparation for further responsibility in our eternal life.

In our last lesson, we discussed Jesus' days as a child; the compassionate care that His parents showed for Him and their diligent completion of the sacrifices that are proscribed by the Laws of Moses for the dedication of a child. I mentioned the fact that Jesus' parents knew, even when Jesus was a child, that He was destined to be a sacrifice.

Sacrifices, according to the Mosaic Law, had to be without blemish. So Jesus' parents fulfilled the regulations of the law with respect to Jesus, down to the jot and tittle. For your information, a jot is the dot over the "i", and a tittle is the horizontal mark that crosses a "t".

However, at the conclusion of Jesus' adolescence, Jesus went to John the Baptist and was baptized into John's preaching ministry, which was, as **Matthew 3:1–2** tells us:

**1 In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea,**

**2 and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!"**

Repentance means to feel such sorrow for sin as to be disposed to change one's life for the better. The foundation of repentance is the decision to do that which God has instructed us to do.

Jesus Christ came to earth to do the will of God. Our reason for coming to church is to become like Christ, meaning, to have the Bible illuminated in our minds so that we can clearly understand the principles that Jesus taught and



base our daily personal decisions on those principles. Developing the mind of Christ does not mean to simply acquire information, but to acquire the desire to be obedient to the Bible, which is the doctrine of Jesus Christ, in an informed, insightful and intelligent manner.

It is obvious that since we come to church to obtain the mind of Christ, we lack the mind of Christ when we begin coming to church. We are unlike Christ, in that we make the intentional choice to do things that we know are sinful. To be like Christ, we need to repent, to decide to be sorry for committing sin, to change our desires, and thus, to change our actions, as John the Baptist preached.

Repentance requires that we acknowledge that there is a law, meaning, a codified objective standard of behavior that defines whether or not our actions are sinful. Were there no objective standard, we could not repent, because we would not know whether our actions are sinful or not.

For example, we have a subjective law that gives mothers license to murder their unborn children. And in 2007, over 800,000 mothers did so, not recognizing their action as murder. Although those mothers committed murder, they do not recognize that their actions were sinful, because we have subjectively made this particular sin legal, bypassing the law of God to codify the law of man.

Because of our propensity, meaning our desire, to sin, Biblical laws are bifurcated, meaning split into two parts. The first part of Biblical law is the moral law, which tells us the standards for our interaction with our fellow man. The second part of Biblical law is the ceremonial law, which enumerates the activities that God proscribes for us to perform to either show our repentance for violating the moral law or to commemorate the milestones of our relationship with Him.

The laws about offering sacrifices that we discussed last week are ceremonial laws. But although John was known for his celebration the ceremony of baptism, John's focus was not on ceremonies and commemorations. The ministry of John the Baptist focused on the moral manner in which those to whom he preached were supposed to act.

Last week, I mentioned John's response to being questioned, in **Luke 3:10–14:**

**10 So the people asked [John the Baptist] saying, "What shall we do then?"**

**11 [John] answered and said to them, "He who has two tunics, let him give to him who has none; and he who has food, let him do likewise."**

**12 Then tax collectors also came to be baptized, and said to [John the Baptist], "Teacher, what shall we do?"**

**13 And [John] said to them, "Collect no more than what is appointed for you."**

**14 Likewise the soldiers asked [John the Baptist], saying, "And what shall we do?" So [John] said to them, "Do not intimidate anyone or accuse falsely, and be content with your wages."**



John does not tell the people what type of offering to bring when they sin. John tells the people to not sin so that no ceremony will be necessary.

This passage of Scripture points out the difference between that which we know and how we feel. We are responsible to obey that which we know that God has told us, and our feelings do not change our responsibility.

God gives us both knowledge and feelings, meaning emotions, but God gives us knowledge to make decisions and feelings as either a reward for making a good decision or a penalty for making a poor decision. However, our feelings, meaning our emotions, can be manipulated by descriptive language, which the devil uses to tempt us to associate a positive emotional outcome to a negative action. Once he has deceived us into taking the negative action, the devil rejoices as the negative consequences of the action, of which God originally informed us, actually come to pass.

Yesterday, I watched a movie about a college basketball player named Len Bias, who, after a successful senior season, was drafted by the Boston Celtics to play on their NBA team.

Len was not a habitual user of drugs, and passed the drug test that Boston gave him, but someone convinced Len to try smoking cocaine, assuring him that getting high would not hurt him. Although Len was in excellent physical condition, Len's heart stopped after he smoked the cocaine. Those who were with him called the paramedics, who reached him within minutes and tried to revive him as they transported him to the hospital. When they reached the hospital, the doctors used all their expertise and technology, but they could not restart Len's heart.

Len died, although the person that sold him the cocaine assured him that smoking it would not hurt him.

Many people find emotions overwhelmingly powerful, and find it difficult to have the discipline to make knowledgeable decisions that are contrary to the manipulation of their emotions. God called John the Baptist to the dangerous job of telling people to not make sinful, emotional decisions.

The episode that commands our attention today is explained in **Mark 6:17–18**, which says:

**17 For Herod himself had sent and laid hold of John, and bound him in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife; for he had married her.**

**18 Because John had said to Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife."**

**Leviticus 18:16, 20:21** describes the principle of God's Law that John the Baptist was transmitting to Herod:

**16 You shall not uncover the nakedness of your brother's wife; it is your brother's nakedness.**



**21 If a man takes his brother's wife, it is an unclean thing. He has uncovered his brother's nakedness. They shall be childless.**

But Herod wanted his brother wife Herodias and Herodias wanted her husband's brother Herod. The feelings caused by the desire of a man for a woman and vice versa are powerful incentives to act, but, we are instructed to not make decisions based upon our feelings. We are specifically instructed that a man's sister-in-law is off limits to him; because of the closeness of the relationship of brothers, God considers a man's sister-in-law to be sexually equivalent to his sister. Thus God considers a sexual relationship between a brother and sister-in-law to be a form of incest.

God commands that we live, not by the excitement of emotional attraction, but by the stable principle of commitment. God has so fixed our environment that there will be someone or something more attractive than that which we have around every corner, but admonishes us to keep our commitments so that we can learn the discipline that will enable us to exercise dominion over the earth, and so that we can develop wisdom and knowledge in preparation for further responsibility in our eternal life.

God commands that we persevere through the development of long, committed relationships because life is eternal, which is a long, long time. God has persevered with the sinfulness of man from the days of the Garden until now. Those of us that have raised children have had to persevere with their immaturity from their birth until their acquisition of financial independence, which generally does not take place for twenty years or more. It takes time and commitment to learn the lessons of maturity; I have made some decisions about my relationship with my wife that I would not have made 25 or 35 years ago simply because the Lord has blessed us to mature together across the years.

But Herod was not interested in developing maturity, being as immature as a child. Herod simply wanted a new toy with which to play, and Herodias was it.

And John took away some of Herod's enjoyment of his new toy when he pointed out Herod's sin. Quite often when we know that we are doing the wrong thing, the pleasure of the feeling that that which we are doing brings us overrides the shame that we feel for violating God's principle. But, we have difficulty enjoying that pleasurable feeling when someone reminds us that we are offending God.

Hans Christian Anderson wrote the story of the Emperor's New Clothes.

An Emperor who cared for nothing but his appearance and attire hired two tailors who promised him the finest suit of clothes from a fabric invisible to anyone who was unfit for his position or was "just hopelessly stupid". When the tailors brought out the invisible cloth to the Emperor for his inspection, the Emperor could not see the cloth, but he pretended that he could for fear of appearing unfit for his position or stupid. The Emperor's inner circle did the same.



When the bogus tailors reported that the suit was finished, they mimed dressing the Emperor and the Emperor paraded his new suit before his subjects, who all claimed to be able to see the clothes rather than be thought of as stupid.

But, a little boy in the crowd, who was too young to understand stupidity, blurted out that the Emperor was naked. The Emperor cringed, recognizing that he actually was naked as the child said, but continued the procession because he was too proud to publicly acknowledge his mistake.

Herod, like the Emperor, tried to rationalize that he was dressed in the sexual and emotional reward of that which he was doing with his brother's wife, but like the Emperor before the little boy, Herod cringed and could not enjoy his sin as long as John the Baptist was reminding him that his sin was naked before God. And Herod listened to John the Baptist, as **Mark 6:20** tells us:

**20 for Herod feared John [the Baptist], knowing that he was a just and holy man, and [Herod] protected [John the Baptist]. And when [Herod] heard [John the Baptist], he did many things, and heard him gladly.**

But, since Herod listened to John the Baptist and feared him, knowing that John was a righteous man and since was Herod protecting John, why did Herod arrest him? **Mark 6:19** records:

**19 Therefore Herodias held it against [John the Baptist] and wanted to kill him, but she could not;**

Had Herodias been the Emperor in our story, that little boy in the crowd would have been short his head, because Herodias lacked a conscience and was not acquainted with the concept of principle.

When a person is without principle, their emotional reaction to their situation is their only reaction. They have no ability to react intellectually; they simply vent their emotions and attack anyone that stands between them and their objective, because, to them, there is no such thing as principle.

Every interaction is, to them, strictly personal and emotional, because the world is only about them. Anyone that says "no" to them or postulates that that which they are doing is wrong instantly becomes their personal enemy, because they do not perceive principles, but only emotions.

Herodias did not want to discuss the finer points of the law with John, nor was she interested in why God decreed that men should not marry their brother's wife, because Herodias took John's opposition to her marriage to Herod as a personal affront. Herodias wanted John killed as revenge because she perceived John as her enemy, trying to deny her that which she wanted out of personal animus.

I'm not exactly sure now the psychologists came to this conclusion, but the psychology textbooks that I have read indicate that when a child is born, the child thinks that their mother's breast actually belongs to them. Psychologists postulate that the reason that children cry is not necessarily because they are hungry, but rather because of the injustice that they feel when the breast which





they “own” is not instantly available to them. This level of self-centeredness is a function of immaturity, as a newborn baby is the most immature person on the face of the earth.

You may remember some of our earlier lessons in which I made the point that a child is born with only the subconscious functions of his or her brain working because of the size that the head has to be to travel through the birth canal. The analogy is that a child is born with his brain disassembled, and, over time, as the connections in the brain, called synapses, come together, the child develops emotional and volitional maturity. A baby can only see the world in terms of his or her own perspective. This is because his or her brain does not mature until the child completes his physical development at the end of puberty.

But maturity is not just a physical process. **Proverbs 22:6** tells us:  
**6 Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it.**

Along with physical maturity, a child must have the proper intellectual guidance from his parents and proper experiences in the world to develop the intellectual construct of conscience. A child has to have the proper number of synapses physically connected to develop conscience, but the child must also be taught the concepts that develop a conscience to have one.

Children are not born with a conscience and will not volunteer to learn conscience; they must be taught by their parents and practice taking their turn and respecting the prerogatives of other people before they can learn that other people matter. The teaching of conscience is not all lecture driven; some of this teaching must be by example and experience.

Herodias, obviously, missed some of the teaching that would have led her to develop a conscience. Being a princess, she missed some of the discipline that a child should have received and the lessons that would have given her the sense that other people matter. So, Herodias, like the baby, felt entitled to have whatever she wanted because, in her own mind, she was the most important person in the world and her desires should have been at the top of everyone's agenda. To Herodias, John the Baptist was a nobody that was thwarting her and making her new husband think that something was wrong with their situation, which Herodias saw as a personal affront that could not be tolerated.

So Herodias felt compelled to deal with the situation. But her requests to Herod to have John the Baptist killed were met with a negative. Although Herodias was not used to be denied a request by a man, Herodias knew that the best way to manipulate a man was to remove his mind from his intellectual capacity and focus his mind on his emotions. Men have one overriding emotion stimuli that can almost unerringly paralyze their intellectual capacity, and that is sexual arousal.

Herodias was expert in stimulating that emotion, particularly in her husband, whom she had already seduced into taking her away from his brother.



Herodias recognized the fact that I mentioned earlier, that the feelings caused by the desire of a man for a woman and vice versa are powerful incentives to act. Herodias wanted stimulate Herod into action, but Herod had already rejected her request. So Herodias decided to give Herod a new, more potent, stimulus. **Mark 6:21–23** records:

**21 Then an opportune day [for Herodias] came when Herod on his birthday gave a feast for his nobles, the high officers, and the chief men of Galilee. 22 And when Herodias' daughter herself came in and danced [before them], and pleased Herod and those who sat with him, the king said to the girl, "Ask me whatever you want, and I will give it to you." 23 [Herod] also swore to [Herodias' daughter] "Whatever you ask me, I will give you, up to half my kingdom."**

Just a couple of weeks ago, we just read King Ahasuerus' promise to give half of his kingdom to Queen Esther because she put on her royal finery and seduced Ahasuerus the king with the intent of giving the Jews in Persia the right to defend themselves against the treachery of the wicked Haman.

This case was different.

Esther was Ahasuerus' wife, and was morally free to seduce him at any time for any reason. Herodias was also morally free to seduce Herod, at any time for any reason.

But, Herodias sent her daughter, her young, nubile, unblemished, virginal daughter, to perform a sensual dance before the nobles, the high officers and the chief men of Galilee in order to seduce her dirty old husband, because the feelings caused by the desire of a man for a woman and vice versa are powerful incentives to act.

And the girl's seduction was effective.

Younger women potentially have great power over older men, because older men remember the sensual enjoyment that came from having a young girl. To an older man, the supple flesh of a younger woman is potentially a fountain of youth. But God commands that we make decisions, not by the excitement of sexual or emotional attraction, but by the stable principle of commitment.

God has so fixed our environment that there will be someone or something more attractive than that which we have around every corner. But God admonishes us to keep our commitments so that we can learn the discipline that will enable us to exercise dominion over the earth, and so that we can develop wisdom and knowledge in preparation for further responsibility in our eternal life.

So older men are admonished to have the wisdom required to not be seduced by attractive younger women, but to maintain their commitment to their wives until death does them part.

Herod, however, had not come to this level of maturity, and was susceptible to the seductive influences of young flesh. Thus, in **Mark 6:24–25**:





**24 So [Herodias' daughter] went out and said to her mother, "What shall I ask?" And [Herodias] said, "The head of John the Baptist!"**

**25 Immediately [Herodias' daughter] came in with haste to the king and asked, saying, "I want you to give me at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter."**

Looking at the flesh of a young woman may seem to be harmless at first, but it is only harmless at first. The emotional feelings that are excited by this stimulation can be manipulated to cause us to take a negative action. Once the devil has deceived us into taking the negative action, the devil rejoices as the negative consequences of the action, of which God originally informed us, actually come to pass.

Herod did not have to murder John the Baptist just because a nubile young girl asked him to do so. Herod could have followed the commandment of God, which says, in **Deuteronomy 5:17**:

**17 'You shall not murder.**

But, **Mark 6:26** tells us:

**26 And [Herod] the king was exceedingly sorry; yet, because of the oaths and because of those who sat with him, he did not want to refuse [Herodias' daughter].**

Herod was the naked Emperor. Herod knew that he had no clothes on, but he thought that it would be better to maintain the pretense to avoid losing face before those who were with him. Herod knew that he should not kill John, because John was a just and holy man, but Herod had sworn to give the girl that which she wanted and did not want to lose face. So, just as the Emperor walked around naked, Herod did that which he knew was wrong, with the full knowledge that he was doing wrong but caught up by the wiles of the devil. **Mark 6:27–28** records:

**27 Immediately the king sent an executioner and commanded [John the Baptist's] head to be brought. And he went and beheaded [John] in prison, 28 brought [John's] head on a platter, and gave it to the girl; and the girl gave it to her mother.**

As I said at the beginning of my account of this episode, telling people to not make sinful, emotional decisions is a dangerous job. And the danger stops many people from speaking up. But, in this case, the ministry of John the Baptist was continued by a person with a more powerful preaching ministry than John ever had. **Matthew 4:12, 13, 17** tells us:

**12 Now when Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, He departed to Galilee.**

**13 And leaving Nazareth, He came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the regions of Zebulun and Naphtali,**

**17 From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."**



## FAMILY LIFE BAPTIST CHURCH

And Jesus came to John's territory in Galilee, powerfully preaching the moral law, because Jesus came to end the sacrificial system once and for all, as **John 3:16–17** tells us:

**16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.**

**17 For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.**

God sent Jesus Christ into the world to be the final sacrifice for sin.

**Hebrews 9:11–15** tells us:

**11 But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation.**

**12 Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place [in Heaven, not on earth] once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.**

**13 For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh,**

**14 how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?**

**15 And for this reason [Jesus Christ] is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.**

Jesus Christ cleanses our consciences and redeems us from our sins, under the first covenant, the Old Testament Covenant, the covenant of the Mosaic Law. And how does Jesus do this? **Hebrews 8:10–12** tells us:

**10 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.**

**11 None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them.**

**12 For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more."**

The Laws of God are codified in the Bible, and Jesus Christ redeems us by His blood and writes the Laws of God in the hearts of those saved by the Holy Spirit. Jesus tells us, in **John 14:26**:

**26 But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.**

And Paul tells us, in **Ephesians 4:30–32**:



**30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.**

**31 Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice.**

**32 And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.**

And the Holy Spirit instructs us to conform to the moral instructions from Jesus Christ, who Himself made the sacrifice that our sins might be forgiven.

A life persevering in following Jesus' instructions, with the help of the Holy Spirit, especially in our interactions with the spouse to whom we have pledged our lives, will allow us to develop the maturity, wisdom and knowledge that will prepare us for further responsibility in our eternal life.

So let us not be caught up by the wiles of the devil, committing evil in order to save face as was Herod, but let us rather be caught up by Jesus Christ and His Holy Spirit, putting away bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, evil speaking, and malice, and kindly and tenderheartedly forgiving one another, especially our spouses, even as God in Christ forgave each of us.

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