

"Satan's Next Attack"

Acts 12

**Introduction:** Last week in our study we finished looking at Acts 11 which ended in a way that glorified God. The Gentiles that were saved at Antioch showed their love to the Jews at Jerusalem by giving to meet their needs in the middle of a famine. This was a wonderful act of love by the Gentiles considering the divide that existed between some of the Jews and the Gentiles.

**Acts 11:19-20**

<sup>19</sup> Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only.

<sup>20</sup> And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the LORD Jesus.

This divide was bridged with love. The Gentiles made a choice to forgive and to love the Jews which is what God desired and therefore God was glorified in the act. Then in the middle of all of this the church was growing in Antioch.

**Acts 11:21-24**

<sup>21</sup> And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord.

<sup>22</sup> Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem: and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch.

<sup>23</sup> Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord.

<sup>24</sup> For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord.

On top of all of this the believers at Antioch were living in a way that Jesus was seen in them.

**Acts 11:26**

<sup>26</sup> And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.

The church at Antioch is growing, people are getting saved, and Jesus Christ is being manifest in the lives of the believers. Then we come to chapter 12.

➤ **Satan's Attack**

**Notice Acts 12:1-2**

Now we see that Herod decides to vex certain of the church and he does so by killing James with the sword. When I read this the Words of Peter come to mind instantly.

**1 Peter 4:12-13**

<sup>12</sup> Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you:

<sup>13</sup> But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.

As we step back and look at the first 12 chapters of Acts, we can clearly see Satan doing all he can to stop the growth of the church. He had Ananias and Sapphira ring deception into the church, he then had the Apostles beaten at the end of Acts 5. Then in Acts 6 he tried to bring division with the church as some of the windows were neglected. In Acts 7 he had Stephen stoned and great persecution come upon the believers in Jerusalem which scattered the church. In Acts 8 Satan sows a tare among the wheat as Simon the wizard professes to saved and is baptized but it was all an attempt to gain power for self-promotion. In Acts 11 we see Satan's attempt to cause contention as the leaders in Judea confront Peter for taking the Gospel to the Gentiles. Then we come to chapter 12 and now Herod kills James. This was an attempt by Satan to us fear to silence the church so as to stop the growth. Fear is a tool that has been used by Satan from the beginning of creation. Let me show you the fear in the Garden.

**Genesis 3:1-5**

Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?

<sup>2</sup> And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden:

<sup>3</sup> *But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.*

<sup>4</sup> *And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die:*

<sup>5</sup> **For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.**

Here in verse 5, we see the fear that Satan used on Eve. It was the fear of "missing out on something" and it was this fear that led her to eat the forbidden fruit. It was like he said to her, "By not eating this fruit you are missing so much. You can be as a god and have a greater knowledge if you will just eat that which God has forbidden. God is keeping something from you that will improve your life." Satan sold that lie to Eve and we know how it all ended. The "fear of missing out" has caused many people to perish in their sins and it has caused many believers to live for the world and not for the Lord. There have been many people who have not come to Jesus because they witnessed how the lives of others changed when they were saved and they did not want that to happen to them because they feared they would miss out on something fun.

#### **Hebrews 2:14-15**

<sup>14</sup> *Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;*

<sup>15</sup> **And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.**

The fear of death here can be seen in two ways. It is the fear of literal death that has held many in bondage. The fear of literal death has led many to a lifestyle in which they do all they can to avoid death. This lifestyle has become a bondage for many. Death can also be seen as the absence of life and there are many people who are fearful of missing out on life so they have a lifestyle that is filled to the brim in an attempt to live life to the fullest so that they do not miss out on anything. They are far too busy to live a life dedicated God because they do not want to miss something or they do not want their children to miss something. These people are in bondage to an overloaded lifestyle. Another fear that Satan uses is the "fear of failure." We see this in the call of Jeremiah.

#### **Jeremiah 1:4-8**

<sup>4</sup> *Then the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,*

<sup>5</sup> *Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.*

<sup>6</sup> **Then said I, Ah, Lord GOD! behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child.**

<sup>7</sup> *But the LORD said unto me, Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak.*

<sup>8</sup> *Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the LORD.*

Let us now get back to Acts 12.

**Notice Acts 12:1 again.**

Who is this Herod?

He was the grandson of a ruling Emperor of iniquity, Herod the Great. Who was Herod the Great?

**Matthew 2:1, 16**

*Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem,*

<sup>16</sup> *Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men.*

This was his grandfather. His uncle was Herod Antipas.

**Matthew 14:3-10**

<sup>3</sup> *For Herod had laid hold on John, and bound him, and put him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife.*

<sup>4</sup> *For John said unto him, It is not lawful for thee to have her.*

<sup>5</sup> *And when he would have put him to death, he feared the multitude, because they counted him as a prophet.*

<sup>6</sup> *But when Herod's birthday was kept, the daughter of Herodias danced before them, and pleased Herod.*

<sup>7</sup> Whereupon he promised with an oath to give her whatsoever she would ask.

<sup>8</sup> And she, being before instructed of her mother, said, Give me here John Baptist's head in a charger.

<sup>9</sup> And the king was sorry: nevertheless for the oath's sake, and them which sat with him at meat, he commanded it to be given her.

<sup>10</sup> And he sent, and beheaded John in the prison.

His uncle was the Herod who had John the Baptist killed. This Herod in Acts 12 also had a son named Herod Agrippa II whom Paul would stand before in Acts 26. This entire family was wicked and deep in iniquity. They were all used as instruments of Satan for many years. Notice the words of Whitcomb on Herod.

*"Herod Agrippa I was raised in a godless, demonic atmosphere. He lived in Rome where he got into trouble with Tiberias, the Emperor who threw him into prison. Later the emperors Caligula (also known as Gaius) and Claudius rescued and honored him and Claudius appointed him as king over Judea. He ended up ruling a large portion of Palestine. His reign was from A.D. 37 to A.D. 44. He tried to gain favor with the Jews by outwardly observing the law of Moses and by honoring Jewish customs."*

There is also something else about this family that I want you to see. This entire family was the descendants of Esau. Let us notice something about Esau.

**Genesis 25:29-34**

<sup>29</sup> And Jacob sod pottage: and Esau came from the field, and he was faint:

<sup>30</sup> And Esau said to Jacob, Feed me, I pray thee, with that same red pottage; for I am faint: therefore was his name called Edom.

<sup>31</sup> And Jacob said, Sell me this day thy birthright.

<sup>32</sup> And Esau said, Behold, I am at the point to die: and what profit shall this birthright do to me?

<sup>33</sup> And Jacob said, Swear to me this day; and he sware unto him: and he sold his birthright unto Jacob.

<sup>34</sup> Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentiles; and he did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way: thus Esau despised his birthright.

Esau sold his birthright which was his right to be the spiritual leader of the family. He is a type/picture of the sin nature in each of us and the selling of the birthright is a picture of how our sin nature despises spiritual matters. That is what Paul wrote Romans 7.

**Romans 7:18**

*<sup>18</sup> For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.*

When we see what the Herod family was like we must know that they are true historical people and in them we see how the flesh wars against that which is spiritual.

**Conclusion:**

There are several verses that we need to keep in mind in our battle with the flesh.

**Romans 13:13-14**

*<sup>13</sup> Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying.*

*<sup>14</sup> But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.*

**Romans 6:6-7, 11-13**

*<sup>6</sup> Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.*

*<sup>7</sup> For he that is dead is freed from sin.*

*<sup>11</sup> Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

*<sup>12</sup> Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.*

*<sup>13</sup> Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.*