

"The last days of Herod"

Acts 12

**Introduction:** Last week in our study of Acts we were able to see the prayers of the church answered as Peter was set free from the prison.

**Notice Acts 12:5**

While these believers prayed, they were completely unaware as to what God was doing in the prison. God sent His angel to bring Peter out safely. The chains fell off and Peter followed the angel as he made his way out of prison. He then came to the house of Mary where the praying believers were gathered. When he knocked on the door a servant girl by the name of Rhoda came to the door but when she heard Peter's voice, she was so excited she forgot to open the door.

**Notice Acts 12:12-14**

When she shared the news with the other believers, they were all in disbelief.

**Notice Acts 12:15-16**

The answer to their prayers was knocking on the door and they struggled to see it. I want to make an application here that we did not consider last week.

**Application:**

When I read this passage, I cannot help but wonder how many times God has answered our prayers but it was not in the way that we expected and therefore we missed His mighty hand at work. An example would be when we pray for someone who is very ill and we ask God to touch them and raise them up and in the midst of their sickness they die. In this situation they were raised up with Jesus Christ in the heavenlies. They were made free from all pain and suffering. Our prayers were answered but not in the way in which we expected and therefore we miss the answered prayer.

**Philippians 1:21-23**

<sup>21</sup> For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

<sup>22</sup> But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not.

<sup>23</sup> For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better:

Getting back to Peter, the believers did open the door and were astonished that it was Peter. These people believed in prayer but they were not overflowing with faith. Peter told his story and then he moved on because at this time he was a fugitive.

**Notice Acts 12:16-17**

Now we have come to where we stopped last week.

**"The Death of Herod"**

**Notice Acts 12:18**

We are not given much information about the conversations between the soldiers but I can imagine that there was panic among them.

According to the Justinian Code, written hundreds of years after these events in Acts 12, if a guard were to allow a prisoner to escape, then that guard would have to face the same penalty that the escaped prisoner would have faced. These guards would have known this and what awaited them.

**Notice Acts 12:19**

Herod put the guards on trial and none of them could explain what had happened. There was no explanation that would satisfy Herod and therefore he had them executed.

**Application:**

Those who set their minds to persecute God's people do not understand the danger they place themselves in. We see this truth two times in Daniel.

**Daniel 3:20-22**

*<sup>20</sup> And he commanded the most mighty men that were in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and to cast them into the burning fiery furnace.*

*<sup>21</sup> Then these men were bound in their coats, their hosen, and their hats, and their other garments, and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.*

*<sup>22</sup> Therefore because the king's commandment was urgent, and the furnace exceeding hot, the flames of the fire slew those men that took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.*

**Daniel 6:22-24**

*<sup>22</sup> My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt.*

*<sup>23</sup> Then was the king exceedingly glad for him, and commanded that they should take Daniel up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him, because he believed in his God.*

*<sup>24</sup> And the king commanded, and they brought those men which had accused Daniel, and they cast them into the den of lions, them, their children, and their wives; and the lions had the mastery of them, and brake all their bones in pieces or ever they came at the bottom of the den.*

Notice Acts 12:19 again.

Herod then went from Judaea down to Caesarea. I think it is important that we notice that he went "DOWN". The man was in a downward spiritual spiral and did not even realize it. He is a picture of Romans 1 in an individual's life.

#### **Romans 1:18-24**

*<sup>18</sup> For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;*

*<sup>19</sup> Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them.*

*<sup>20</sup> For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:*

*<sup>21</sup> Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.*

*<sup>22</sup> Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools,*

*<sup>23</sup> And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.*

*<sup>24</sup> Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves:*

#### **Notice Acts 12:20**

We are not told why Herod was displeased with Tyre and Sidon. Tyre and Sidon were dependent upon Israel for many supplies and therefore they were desperate. The leaders had connections with Blastus the king's chamberlain and they went to him to seek a way of peace. Those of Tyre and Sidon wanted to be on good terms with Herod because they depended on him for many of their needs. Herod nourished and supported them in many ways, and without the King's help, they would be in trouble. This would lead them to bow down to Herod.

**Application:**

In all of this I am reminded of the need for us to trust in the Lord for what we need.

Without **faith** in God's power to sustain us through life there is then the temptation to compromise and to give into the ways of the world.

**Revelation 3:14-17**

*<sup>14</sup> And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God;*

*<sup>15</sup> I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot.*

*<sup>16</sup> So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.*

*<sup>17</sup> Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:*

Here was a city of people who had to use aqueducts to bring in their water from Hierapolis and they were very quick to compromise when an enemy approached because they feared losing their water supply. There was no faith or trust in God to provide. This is why it is so important that we always grow in our faith. The more you know the Lord the more we learn to lean upon Him. This then results in God being glorified in our lives when the trials of life come.

Let us notice what the people of Tyre and Sidon did.

**Notice Acts 12:21-22**

According to the historian Josephus this was a "set day" to have a feast in which the Roman Emperor would be honored. The people of Tyre and Sidon were there and because they had no faith in the Lord they were left to bow down to Herod and call him God. These people were bowing to Herod as if he was God. Notice Herod's response.

**Notice Acts 12:22-23**

There was no response from Herod. He accepted the praise from the people but God would not allow that to happen. He was immediately smitten by the angel. I want you to see what Josephus records concerning the events here. Keep in mind that Josephus' words are not Scripture.

*"Now when Agrippa had reigned three years over all Judea, he came to the city Caesarea. There he exhibited shows in honor of the emperor. On the second day of the festival, Herod put on a garment made wholly of silver, and of a truly wonderful contexture, and came into the theater early in the morning; at which time the silver of his garment was illuminated by the fresh reflection of the sun's rays upon it. It shone out after a surprising manner, and was so resplendent as to spread a horror over those that looked intently upon him. At that moment, his flatterers cried out that he was a god; and they added, "Be thou merciful to us; for although we have hitherto revered thee only as a man, yet shall we henceforth own thee as superior to mortal nature." Upon this the king did neither rebuke them, nor reject their impious flattery. But as he presently afterward looked up, he saw an owl sitting on a certain rope over his head, and immediately understood that this bird was the messenger of ill tidings, as it had once been the messenger of good tidings to him; and he fell into the deepest sorrow. A severe pain also arose in his belly, and began in a most violent manner. He therefore looked upon his friends, and said, "I, whom you call a god, am commanded presently to depart this life; while Providence thus reproves the lying words you just now said to me; and I, who was by you called immortal, am immediately to be hurried away by death. But I am bound to accept of what Providence allots, as it pleases God; for we have by no means lived ill, but in a splendid and happy manner." After he said this, his pain was become violent. Accordingly he was carried into the palace, and the rumor went abroad that he would certainly die in a little time. But the multitude presently sat in sackcloth, with their wives and children, after the law of their country, and besought God for the king's recovery. All places were also full of mourning and lamentation. Now the king rested in a high chamber, and as he saw them below lying prostrate on the ground, he could not himself forbear weeping. And when he had been quite worn out by the pain in his belly for five days, he departed this life, being in the fifty-fourth year of his age, and in the seventh year of his reign."*

Herod is a picture of the coming world ruler who we refer to as the Anti-Christ. I cannot help but wonder if this was Satan's man for that role because he was set to accept the worship of the people, but the time was not right. God had a different plan.

**Notice Acts 12:24**

The contrast here is that Herod died and the church continued to grow.

**Matthew 16:18**

*<sup>18</sup> And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock **I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.***

Notice Acts 12:25

Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem after taking the love gift that was given by the church at Antioch.

**Conclusion:**

What does all of this mean to us? What is God teaching us in the death of Herod?

**Romans 12:18-20**

*<sup>18</sup> If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.*

*<sup>19</sup> Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.*

*<sup>20</sup> Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.*