

## 42. The Church Saw God Judge Herod

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn that the Lord may choose to answer our prayers in ways that we do not expect. We also saw that the Holy Spirit understands our prayers and prays for us so that our prayers are in agreement with the will of God instead of our own will. This is why God sometimes answers our prayers in a very different way than we expect. We also saw how Herod persecuted the leaders of the church. In our topic today, we will see how the Lord judged Herod, because he did not give glory to God.

In our last topic, we saw how an angel led Peter out of the prison. In Acts 12:18-19, we read, “Then, as soon as it was day, there was no small stir among the soldiers about what had become of Peter. But when Herod had searched for him and not found him, he examined the guards and commanded that *they* should be put to death. And he went down from Judea to Caesarea, and stayed *there*.” When morning came, the Roman soldiers realized that Peter was no longer in the prison. The word translated “stir” means *confusion of mind or great confusion*. Here, we see that the soldiers were very upset when they realized that Peter was no longer in the prison.

The soldiers had a good reason to be very upset. The Roman law said that if a prisoner escaped, the soldiers who were guarding that prisoner would receive the punishment that the prisoner was supposed to have received. Acts 16:27 says, “And the keeper of the prison, awaking from sleep and seeing the prison doors open, supposing the prisoners had fled, drew his sword and was about to kill himself.” Here, we see that the jailor in Philippi was ready to commit suicide, because he thought that the prisoners had fled and that he would receive the punishment that the prisoners in that prison were to receive. This makes it easy to understand why the soldiers were very upset.

When Herod heard that Peter was gone, he immediately ordered a search for Peter. Peter knew that would happen and that is why he had gone to another place after telling those gathered at the house of Mary what the Lord had done. As a result, those who were searching for Peter could not find him. Then, Herod examined the guards. Since they did not know that the Lord had released Peter, the guards had no idea what had happened to Peter. In his anger, Herod immediately gave the command that the soldiers should be put to death. Then, Herod left Judea and went to Caesarea. The city had a beautiful harbor and was located on the Mediterranean Sea. Caesarea was actually the Roman capital for that region and had been named in honor of Augustus Caesar. The city had a large number of Roman soldiers stationed in that city and many of the other people who lived in the city were Greeks.

After Herod arrived in the city of Caesarea, he had some visitors come to see him from the cities of Tyre and Sidon. Acts 12:20-23 says, “Now Herod had been very angry with the people of Tyre and Sidon; but they came to him with one accord, and having made Blastus the king’s personal aide their friend, they asked for peace, because their country was supplied with food by the king’s *country*. So on a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat on his throne and gave an oration to them. And the people kept shouting, ‘The voice of a god and not of a man!’ Then immediately an angel of the Lord struck him, because he did not give glory to God. And he was eaten by worms and died.” Here, we see that Herod had been angry with the people of Tyre and Sidon for some

time.

Tyre and Sidon were seacoast cities north of Caesarea that were located in what is the present country of Lebanon. The Phoenicians who lived in these two cities had made their living for hundreds of years by sending their trading ships throughout the Mediterranean Sea. The people of Galilee had to depend on the ships from these two cities to bring them the things that they needed from other countries. However, the cities of Tyre and Sidon were very dependent upon the area of Galilee for food. As a result, the visitors came to Caesarea, because Herod was very angry with them and they were afraid he would cut off their food supply.

They began their visit by making friends with Blastus, because he was the personal aide of Herod. They told Blastus that they wanted to have peace with Herod. This led to an official meeting with Herod. On the day arranged for that meeting, Herod arrived at the meeting wearing the clothes that were usually worn by a king. This was the same kind of clothing that Herod Agrippa 1 put on Christ when he and his soldiers mocked Christ. Luke 23:11-12 says, “Then Herod, with his men of war, treated Him with contempt and mocked *Him*, arrayed Him in a gorgeous robe, and sent Him back to Pilate. That very day Pilate and Herod became friends with each other, for previously they had been at enmity with each other.” Here, we see that Herod Agrippa 2 acted and wanted to be treated like he was a very important king.

His other actions that day also showed the pride that controlled Herod. Herod sat on his throne and made a speech to the people who had come to him from Tyre and Sidon. Many years earlier, Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, demonstrated the same pride. Daniel 4:30-33 says, “The king spoke, saying, ‘Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for a royal dwelling by my mighty power and for the honor of my majesty?’ While the word *was still* in the king’s mouth, a voice fell from heaven: ‘King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken: the kingdom has departed from you! And they shall drive you from men, and your dwelling *shall be* with the beasts of the field. They shall make you eat grass like oxen; and seven times shall pass over you, until you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses.’ That very hour the word was fulfilled concerning Nebuchadnezzar; he was driven from men and ate grass like oxen; his body was wet with the dew of heaven till his hair had grown like eagles’ *feathers* and his nails like birds’ *claws*.” Here, we see that God judged Nebuchadnezzar for his pride, because he had been warned to repent and did not.

In the same way, we see the great pride of Herod. In order to make peace with Herod and assure their food supply, the people of Tyre and Sidon were shouting, “And the people kept shouting, ‘The voice of a god and not of a man!’” Here, we see that the pride of Herod caused him to enjoy these words and he did not try to stop the people from their shouting. However, God brought judgment on him just as he had brought judgment many years earlier on Nebuchadnezzar. Verse 23 says, “Then immediately an angel of the Lord struck him, because he did not give glory to God.” The Lord sent an angel to bring immediate judgment to Herod. Romans 1:21-23 says, “Because, although they knew God, they did not glorify *Him* as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible

man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.” In his pride, Herod accepted the glory that belongs only to God.

We also see the way that Herod died. We read that he was eaten by worms and died. According to Josephus who was a historian during that period of time, these worms caused Herod to suffer with terrible stomach pains before he died five days later. This is a warning that mankind cannot take the glory that belongs only to God and not experience the judgment of God.

Acts 12:24-25 says, “But the word of God grew and multiplied. And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem when they had fulfilled *their* ministry, and they also took with them John whose surname was Mark.” Here, we see that regardless of what was happening with the political leaders, the Lord caused the teaching of the Word of God to increase. This is a key to remember. The Lord is the One who causes the Word to spread and multiply. In Acts 6:1 and 6:7, we see that the Lord caused the number of disciples to multiply. In Acts 9:31, the Lord caused the number of churches to multiply. Here, we see that the Lord also caused the Word to grow and multiply. The plan of the Lord will be carried out and no political leader can stop His plan.

Paul and Barnabas had delivered the gift to the church at Jerusalem to help them during the time of the famine predicted by Agabus. The word translated “fulfilled” means *to fill up or to complete*. The word translated “ministry” means *service* and especially the service of carrying out the commands of others. In Acts 20:24, Paul used this same word as he spoke to the elders at Ephesus. Acts 20:22-24 says, ““And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me. But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.”” In Acts 20, Paul made it clear that he was carrying out the ministry or service that the Lord had for him. Here, we see that Barnabas and Saul were carrying out the ministry that the Lord and the church at Antioch delegated to them. In the same way, we are to carry out the service that the Lord commands us to do.

Barnabas and Saul also took Mark with them as they returned to Antioch. Here, we see that they were going to begin showing him how to minister among the Gentiles. In the same way, we also want to show our physical and spiritual children how to minister among various ethnic groups. Cross-cultural ministry is best learned by seeing the example of someone who is carrying out a ministry to different cultures. We prepare our children so that they are able to expand their ministry to various cultures by giving them an example to follow. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to minister to other cultures.