

Acts: The Gospel Gone Viral
Lesson 26 “The Judgment of Herod”

I. Introduction - We have been studying through *Acts* and how the gospel went viral through various revivals in the first century throughout the book of *Acts*. These include Pentecost - 3,000 saved, healing of lame man - *Acts 3-4* - 5,000 saved, *Acts 5* - all Jerusalem filled with the doctrine of Christ due to signs and wonders, the revival in Samaria - *Acts 8* - the outpouring of the Spirit on the Gentiles in *Acts 10*, and the awakening in Antioch in *Acts 11*.

A. Two weeks ago I spoke to you about freedom through Christ. We looked at the story from *Acts 12* where King Herod had James arrested and martyred in the midst of a major move of God that was going on in Antioch. The Jews were very pleased by this so Herod arrested Peter. This caused the church to pray and Peter was miraculously released.

B. We made the point that freedom is one of the major manifestations of the spirit of God. ***2 Corinthians 3:17 where the spirit of the Lord is there is freedom.*** This includes freedom from sin, freedom from sickness, freedom from bondage. **Today we are going to look at how far God will go to ensure the freedom of His people to be able to choose to worship Him as we talk about the Judgment of Herod.**

1. God will not force anyone to choose Him. God gives everyone free will because He wants to be served out of love not mandate. He's so merciful that He generally does not judge those who reject Him in this life.
2. The one exception we will see to that is a story like the one we will look at today where Herod was drawing worship and persecuting those who worshipped Jesus. He was in a place of authority and His actions were dangerous because they negatively influenced masses of people. God had to deal with Herod harshly because of His mercy for everyone else.

II. The Judgment of Herod

A. **Acts 12:16-19 God miraculously delivered Peter from a Roman jail.**

1. People didn't escape Roman prisons so this was a big deal to the soldiers..
2. This miracle should have moved Herod to believe, however, it actually caused him to harden his heart. He had the Roman soldiers who allowed the escape to be killed because he chose to not believe. Pride caused Herod to war against God.
3. Look at **Psalm 110:1-7**. This is the most quoted Old Testament passage in the entire New Testament so we need to pay attention to it. It is quoted in ***Acts 2:34-35, 1 Corinthians 15:25, Hebrews 10:13.***
4. A major theme of this passage is kings of the earth that war against God.
 - a. This creates a question. Doesn't God love the kings of the earth who

hate Him? He forgave the woman caught in adultery, Zacchaeus, the Apostle Paul. Why didn't He give Herod grace?

b. Who's to say He didn't. Herod had testimony of the miracles of the Apostles and the rescue of Peter. He hardened his heart. God would't have taken him out of if worked in an office somewhere, but Herod was in a position of influence where he could cause people to go to hell because he shut down the gospel.

c. **Mark 8:15** Jesus warned of the leaven of the Pharisees and Herod. The leaven of the Pharisees is religious form with no power, the leaven of Herod is the political spirit. Herod didn't mind if you had a private faith; he didn't want you to bring it in public where it was a threat to his power.

B. Acts 12:20-24 The Angel of the Lord Kills Herod

1. It isn't clear why Herod became angry with the people of Tyre and Sidon.
2. The people of Tyre and Sidon made friends with Herod's personal aide and possible lover Blastsus and asked for peace.
3. Herod came in royal apparel and made a great speech before them and the people began to declare Herod was a god. This demonstrates the Satanic influence He had on those people that was leading them away from Jesus.
4. The angel of the Lord struck Herod. In the Greek, it says in active voice the angel of the Lord struck Herod. God did this because he was an unbeliever who was not under a covenant of grace and he had so hardened his heart that he received worship from people. Josephus records this in "Antiquities of the Jews."

III. Conclusion and Takeaways

A. God is a God of mercy and grace, but there are rare circumstances He will judge/remove a leader because they are hurting people.

B. God is the one who judges, not us. This is not a message to empower everyone prophesying judgment on every leader you don't like. Look at **1 Timothy 2:1-4**. Paul told the Christians to pray for Nero who was persecuting them. ex: bad fire in Rome - Nero blamed the Christians and used it as grounds to increase persecution.

1. Many theologians think Nero was the antichrist of that day. The Hebrew transliteration of Nero is 666.
2. Nero was assassinated in 68 A.D. God took care of Nero, the church just needed to pray for him. We just need to pray and walk in love.
3. Some leaders won't repent while others like Nebuchadnezzar will. (Because of his pride, God made him go crazy and then he humbled himself and his kingdom was restored.) We need to be on the side of restoration, let God judge.

C. Call Up Prayer Team and Pray Closing Prayer - **Daniel 4:34**