

Valley Bible Church
Sermon Notes for July 20, 2014

Herod's Ruin
Acts 12:18-24

Acts 12 is another episode of the subplot of the earthly powers foiled in their opposition to the work of God (cf. Acts 4 and 5). Acts 12 concludes the first half of Acts as the focus of ministry shifts from Peter to Paul.

1. Herod's revenge on the soldiers (12:18-19)

The Herod of Acts 12 was the grandson of Herod the Great (Matthew 2), the nephew of Herod Antipas (Luke 23), the brother of Herodius (Matthew 14), and the father of Herod Agrippa II (Acts 25-26). He was the black sheep of the Herodian family and rose to power when his childhood friend Caligula became the Roman emperor in 37 A.D.

The disturbance was great because of the unusually high degree of security guarding Peter and due to the impending consequences the soldiers could face. Later we will see soldiers so fearful of their Roman leaders' response to an escape that they would rather take their own life (Acts 16:27) or simply kill all the prisoners (Acts 27:42). Centuries later the Romans officially prescribed that a guard who allowed a prisoner to escape became liable to the same penalty as had awaited the prisoner.

The Roman examination of the guards could include torture to solicit information. That all the guards were executed testifies to the miraculous nature of Peter's freedom, since blame could not be assigned to a guilty soldier.

The execution of the soldiers was not caused by God's rescue of Peter but rather by Herod's sin. They were blessed by the opportunity to hear of Jesus while chained to Peter.

2. God's revenge on Herod (12:20-23)

a. Herod's conflict (12:20)

Herod's death took place in 44 A.D. during a time of famine in the Roman Empire (cf. Acts 11:28). The area of Tyre and Sidon was vulnerable to Herod's anger, because their geographic location as port cities was bordered by fertile territory under Herod's control.

Blastus was Herod's chamberlain (literally, "the one over the bedroom"), denoting his stewardship of the king's household similar to the White House Chief of Staff.

b. Herod's conceit (12:21-22)

Herod's pride is seen in his schedule, his clothing, his position, and his lack of response (cf. Acts 14:11-15).

c. God's condemnation (12:23)

Luke, a physician, included information regarding the physical cause of Herod's death.
Luke, a theologian, included information regarding the spiritual cause of Herod's death.

Revenge belongs to the Lord (Romans 12:19), but the basis for God's judgment on Herod was his attitude. God will judge every evil heart in due time (Romans 1:21).

3. Luke's report on the church (12:24)

This is the fourth of seven progress reports in Acts (cf. 2:47; 6:7; 9:31). The growth of the church continued in spite of Roman opposition (cf. Matthew 16:18).

May we, by God's grace, grow in our faith to serve God for His glory, regardless of the difficulties that we face.