

CP - 2/12/23

Acts 12:18–25 - God Turns the Tables

Sermon Outline:

This chapter shows spiritual conflict. One dynasty of men takes on the True King, the Lord God Almighty. Always trying to stop the advance of the kingdom!

- *Herod the Great - tried to kill Jesus
- *Herod Antipas - killed John the Baptist, mocked Christ before execution
- *Herod Agrippa I - kills James, arrests and plans Peter's execution
- *Herod Agrippa II - Paul stands before him (Acts 26); doesn't believe

***This whole chapter shows ignoring wisdom of Gamaliel's speech in Acts 5:38–39 to leave the believers alone.** - John MacArthur - "Why is it futile to fight against God? BECAUSE GOD FIGHTS BACK! (Jer 21:5, Rev 2:16); "God's Gonna Cut You Down!"

The Herods were nothing more than the latest dynasty trying to overthrow God's plans. This is Psalm 2 front and center!

- Nimrod
- Pharaoh
- Kings of Canaan
- Midianites, Philistines
- Assyrians
- Babylonians
- Now Herod
- Daniel 2:20-21, 4:28–32, Romans 13:1,

Who has more power? God or Herod? Who kingdom will stand?

Two kingdoms: Herod (Rome) and God's kingdom

After 12:4 – James dead and Peter in prison – Looked like 1-0 Agrippa, but no!

- *Jesus kept his promise of Matthew 20:23 – Jesus 1, Agrippa 0
- *Jesus had made Peter a promises, so he could sleep – already been delivered twice!
- *After Peter's rescue, Jesus 2, Agrippa 0
- *Sets up the final scene in chapter 12 where God turns the tables on Agrippa

1. Agrippa's Rage and Humiliation (12:18–19)

- *Didn't have to implement Roman law (Justinian Code 9.4.4)
- *Had 4 soldiers killed perhaps after torture
- *People nothing more than pawns
- *Then pouts back to Caesarea; "goes down" – "to move down, descend" – he should have taken this divine hint that he couldn't win – humbling move – his plan is busted, no execution of Peter, he is humiliated.

2. Agrippa's Hunger for Glory and God's Judgment (12:20–23)

- *Agrippa has issues with Tyre and Sidon (perhaps trade problems)
- *Speech takes place in 44 A.D., possibly in August (Caesar's birthday)
- *Agrippa wasn't Caesar but he sure acted like him. He couldn't be Caesar but he wanted the same glory. He wanted to be a god, but God killed him!
- *Josephus describes how Agrippa wore a silver garment that shone in the sun
- *The Lord struck him, possibly the rupturing of a hydatid cyst – many tapeworm larvae were spread throughout and ate him from the inside - He may have also experienced peritonitis – excruciating pain, possibly divinely prolonged, for five days

***Tyre and Sidon, hungry for food. Herod, hungry for power and glory.**
Worms, hungry agents of divine retribution

The Contrast of Acts 12:

- *Herod lays hands on James and Peter; God lays hands on Herod.
- *An angel strikes Peter and rescues him; an angel strikes Herod and kills him.
- *While in jail, Peter was at peace inside. While in his palace, Herod was destroyed from the inside.
- *Peter was in jail for a week; after being struck, Herod died in less than a week.
- *James lost his head & won a martyr's crown. Herod was eaten by worms & lost his earthly crown.
- *Herod sought glory and died; Peter stepped out of the spotlight and kept preaching life.

3. God Always Advances His Kingdom (12:24–25)

- *Acts 12:23-24 contrasted with 12:1-2 - Who's the real king? (Psalm 2)
- *God advances his kingdom through the faithful sharing of His Word (v. 24)
- *God advances his kingdom through the faithful service to His people (v. 25)

Tertullian (2nd/3rd Century Apologist): “Go on, good governors; the mob will think you all the better if you sacrifice Christians to them; crucify, torture, condemn, destroy us; your injustice is the proof of our innocence. For that reason, God allows us to suffer these things ... Your cruelties, though each be more elaborate than the last, do not profit you; they serve rather as an attraction to our group. The more you mow us down the greater our numbers become; our blood is the seed from which new Christians spring.”

***What do we learn?

- *It is futile to fight against God. Surrender to Him!.
- *God always gets the last word and judges righteously. (He always holds people accountable. Nothing slips past God’s notice. He defends His people & Name.)
- *There is only one Kingdom that will last forever. God will overcome all opposition to His purposes. (Matthew 16:18)

Small Group Questions:

1. How did the Holy Spirit speak to you from the Bible passage and sermon?
2. Talk about the spiritual conflict between God’s kingdom and His enemies. What did Herod Agrippa’s vicious response to Peter’s rescue show about his attitude toward God’s kingdom? Why is it important to remember we are in a spiritual conflict, that people are not our real enemies? (See 2 Timothy 2:24–26)
3. What did Herod do in Caesarea, and how did God judge him? Talk through 12:21–22 (fabricated glory, borrowed throne, human speech) and how Herod hungered for glory. Discuss the irony and contrast of chapter 12 (see the outline above). Why is it comforting or unnerving to know that God always gets the final word? How should this truth comfort believers and terrify unbelievers?
4. What are some of the lessons we learn from Acts 12? What is the biggest lesson over the last three weeks you have learned from Acts 12? Discuss as a group.
5. Spend some time in prayer as a group praising God that He is greater than any earthly king, government, or power. Ask Him to specifically work to advance His kingdom, even in areas and situations that look bleak. Spend some time in prayer as a group for each other.