

Calvary Chapel on the Horizon
October 31, 2021
Acts 12 “The Sovereignty of God”

I. Introduction

Read: Proverbs 3:5-8

- † Last week we saw that Peter recounted the vision that God gave him the previous chapter that was, in essence, removing all the regulations and laws placed on the Jews...
- † And we saw the gospel spread and the church in Antioch grew...and Barnabas went and got Saul from Tarsus to minister in Antioch...
- † And we saw God use different gifts to reach the people...preaching, encouragement, teaching and giving.
- † And this was apparently giving the Jews that didn't believe in Jesus heartburn and so, this week, we will find a new persecution arising...

II. Persecution

A. Herod

Act 12:1 Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church.

- † This Herod was the grandson of Herod the Great...the Herod during the time of the birth of Jesus...
- † It helps to understand a bit about the current Herod – who is actually Herod Agrippa I.
- † Herod the Great had ten wives. One of his wives, Miriam, had a son, Aristopollis that was murdered by Herod the Great, as was Miriam. He felt that they were conspiring against them and so he murdered them both.
- † There was actually a saying during the time of Herod the Great that it was safer to be his pig than his son as he murdered several of his sons. Aristopollis was one of them. But before Aristopollis was murdered, he had this son Herod Agrippa.
- † So, Herod Agrippa I, the son of Miriam – Miriam was a direct descendant of the Maccabeans, which made her a Jewess, but she was married to Herod the Great and so Herod Agrippa I was sort of half Jewish in a sense.

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- † He was very interested in the Jewish customs and daily offered a sacrifice according to the Jewish law. He kept the Jewish customs. He spent some thirty years of his early life in Rome, but then came back to Jerusalem to rule and was seeking the favor of the Jews.
- † Consequently, he began to persecute the church in order to please the Jews.
- † But we know that it is foolish to oppose God: **Luk 1:37** For with God nothing shall be impossible.
- † **And it's foolish to fear people and not God: Pro 29:25-26** The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the LORD shall be safe. 26 Many seek the ruler's favor; but every man's judgment cometh from the LORD.

B. James

Act 12:2 And he killed James the brother of John with the sword.

- † This is James, the brother or John – one of the two "sons of thunder" who wanted to call down fire on a town.
- † This is also the James of "Peter, James & John" – one of the inner circle of disciples that Jesus kept close to Himself...
- † James was with Jesus on the mount of Transfiguration, he was with Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane when Jesus was praying that the Father would remove the cup of wrath from Him...
- † James is the first Apostle martyred...recognize, though, that God allowed it. Satan can't harm us without the Father's permission (ref. Job)
- † Why did He allow Herod to kill James? We don't know...
- † We do have a verse that brings comfort: **Isa 57:1** The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart: and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come.
- † It's important for us to remember that this world is not our home...that we walk by faith and not sight trusting in God and not man.

C. Peter

Act 12:3-5 And because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also. (Then

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were the days of unleavened bread.) 4 And when he had apprehended him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four quaternions of soldiers to keep him; intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people. 5 Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him.

- † **Herod, fully planning on killing Peter similarly to James, puts him prison until after the Passover.**
- † **Herod, it appears, looks on Peter as a “high value target”, and has possibly heard of when Peter and John were thrown into prison after healing the lame man on the steps of the temple in Acts 3, and thinks he can outsmart God by assigning a quaternion of Roman soldiers to guard him...**
- † **A quaternion is a set of 4 teams of 4 (in the current Army it would be like 4 fire teams that make up a squad of soldiers). Two soldiers would be chained to Peter (on each side) and two soldiers would guard the door. They would rotate every 3 hours throughout a 24-hour period.**
- † **The appearance is that Herod is planning on not allowing God to sovereignly intervene in his plans...**wrong!** God is still on the throne as we will see!**

III. But God...

A. An Angel

Act 12:6-11 And when Herod would have brought him forth, the same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains: and the keepers before the door kept the prison. 7 And, behold, the angel of the Lord came upon him, and a light shined in the prison: and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, Arise up quickly. And his chains fell off from his hands. 8 And the angel said unto him, gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals. And so, he did. And he saith unto him, cast thy garment about thee, and follow me. 9 And he went out, and followed him; and wist not that it was true which was done by the angel; but thought he saw a vision. 10 When they were past the first and the second ward, they came unto the iron gate that leadeth unto the city; which opened to them of his own accord: and they went out, and passed on through one street; and forthwith the angel departed from him. 11 And when Peter was come to himself, he said, Now I know of a surety, that the Lord hath sent his angel, and hath delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews.

- † **In reading of Peter’s rescue...we initially find him sleeping! We could guess what would allow him to be sleeping when he knows his death is imminent...**

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- † **It could be despair in which sleep is all he has; it could be exhaustion – maybe he’s been awake most of the week? Or, it could be the peace that surpasses understanding knowing that this world is not his home and that he’s thinking he’ll be back with Jesus soon!**
- † **Ultimately, all we know is that he is sleeping soundly enough that the bright light doesn’t wake him...rather the angel has to “smite” him to wake him! ...and, Peter is so groggy upon waking that the angel has to tell him how to get dressed!**
- † **We’re not told what was done to the soldiers so that Peter could walk right out with the angel...but whatever, Peter ends up on the street without shackles or guards. It is then that Peter realizes that this isn’t a dream but that the Lord has delivered him...very surreal!**
- † **God’s sovereignty is obvious and evident in that “God’s will supersedes Herod’s will” every time!**

B. Telling the Brethren

Act 12:12-19 And when he had considered the thing, he came to the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark; where many were gathered together praying. 13 And as Peter knocked at the door of the gate, a damsel came to hearken, named Rhoda. 14 And when she knew Peter's voice, she opened not the gate for gladness, but ran in, and told how Peter stood before the gate. 15 And they said unto her, Thou art mad. But she constantly affirmed that it was even so. Then said they, It is his angel. 16 But Peter continued knocking: and when they had opened the door, and saw him, they were astonished. 17 But he, beckoning unto them with the hand to hold their peace, declared unto them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he said, Go shew these things unto James, and to the brethren. And he departed, and went into another place. 18 Now as soon as it was day, there was no small stir among the soldiers, what was become of Peter. 19 And when Herod had sought for him, and found him not, he examined the keepers, and commanded that they should be put to death. And he went down from Judaea to Caesarea, and there abode.

- † **So Peter when to John Mark’s mother’s home...John Mark is the individual that went with Saul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey (we’ll learn of that next week).**
- † **But, after knocking and having the door opened by Rhoda (meaning Rose), she got so excited she shut the door on him and ran to tell the others...**
- † **But they didn’t believe – they had been praying without ceasing for a week and now that their prayers were answered they didn’t believe...this is comforting: they are just as human as we are!**

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- † **Recognize they were not placing their faith in their own faith but in God despite their lack of trust...and God honored their prayers!**
- † **Then Peter told them how God had delivered him and (probably) went to hide somewhere for a while as the Guards would no doubt be looking for him.**
- † **As for the quaternion of soldiers...Herod was a bit “put-out” that Peter escaped and so he had them put to death.**

IV. Herod Agrippa I

Act 12:20-25 And Herod was highly displeased with them of Tyre and Sidon: but they came with one accord to him, and, having made Blastus the king's chamberlain their friend, desired peace; because their country was nourished by the king's country. 21 And upon a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne, and made an oration unto them. 22 And the people gave a shout, saying, It is the voice of a god, and not of a man. 23 And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost. 24 But the word of God grew and multiplied. 25 And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem, when they had fulfilled their ministry, and took with them John, whose surname was Mark.

- † **Herod accepted the praise and acclimation that he was a god – instead of giving the One True God all the glory...**
- † **The consequence was that the angel smote him with worms and he died. Josephus tells us it was an agonizing death that took about 4 days.**
- † **Isa 42:8** I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images.
- † **[God is sovereign] Oh, how important it is for us to walk humbly with God! Mic 6:8** He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?
- † **As well, this is a foreshadowing of Hell with regards to the worms...Jesus speaks of Hell in Mark 9 and says, “Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.”**

V. Conclusion

Rom 8:31-39 What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? 32 He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also

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freely give us all things? 33 Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. 34 Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. 35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? 36 As it is written, for thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. 37 Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. 38 For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, 39 Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.