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Herod Agrippa Gets His Due
12: 19b-25

August 1, 44 AD

Herod Agrippa gets his due DIG: How similar or dissimilar was this Herod's death to the death of his uncle (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ, to see link clickAx – He Will be Called a Nazarene**)**? What did Herod Agrippa do that showed him to be the fraud he was? What happened as a result of God's dealing with Herod?**

REFLECT: Who do you see as a current "Herod" in today's world. Can you take comfort in knowing that God's judgment is certain? How do you give glory to God? How can you help the word of God to continue to grow where you live?

Several months had passed since **Peter's** escape, and the scene now shifts to consider the fate of **Herod Agrippa**. It seems that **the king** was going to receive a delegation from **Tyre and Sidon**, who had apparently displeased **Agrippa** in some way. Having reconciled, **Herod** gave a public speech during a festival honoring Claudius Caesar to commemorate the agreement. It was on that **appointed day** that **Luke** ends this part of **his** account by describing **Agrippa's** grisly death. After **executing the guards** (**to see link click Bk – Peter's Persecution and Deliverance**), **Herod** went **down from Judea and stayed in his** headquarters in **Caesarea**, which was commonplace after the Passover **(12:19b).**

Now it happened that Herod Agrippa was furious with the people of Tyre and Sidon, which was not part of **Agrippa's** territory, yet they depended on the Jews for their food supply**.** Yet, **they** were concerned enough about **Herod's displeasure** that the ambassadors of **Tyre and Sidon came to him, united. Having won over Blastus the king's personal aide** (probably by means of bribery)**. They** kept on **asking for peace – because their country was supplied with food,** especially grain, **from the king's country** and evidently **he** had cut **it** off **(12:20)**.

On the appointed day that **Herod** was going to make **his** decision regarding **the food** supply **of Tyre and Sidon, he donned his royal robes and, taking his** judgment **seat upon the throne, began to make a speech to them.** We don't know what **Agrippa** said in **his** speech, but we know why **he** said it. **He** wanted to impress **the people**. And **he** did! **The people** played on **his** ego and **were shouting** continually: **The voice of a god and not a human (12:21-22).** However, **he did not give glory to ADONAI,** nor did **he** rebuke **them**, so the whole scene was nothing but idolatry.[267]

Luke's description of **Herod Agrippa's death** is consistent, though not identical, with that of **Josephus, the first century Jewish historian: Agrippa came to Caesarea, where there was a festival in honor of Claudius Caesar arranged for him. On the second day he put on a garment made entirely of silver threads and came into the theater early in the morning, at which time the silver of his garment reflecting the sun's rays shone so brightly as to cause fear for those gazing at him. Therefore, his flatterers exclaimed that he was a god, adding, "Be merciful to us; for although till now we have reverenced you only as a man, from now on, we will regard you as superior to mortal nature." But the king neither rebuked them nor rejected their irreverent flattery. However, as he looked up he saw an owl** (see the commentary on **Jeremiah Ad – The Owl as a Symbol of Judgment**) **and immediately understood that this bird was the messenger of terrible news. Suddenly and violently he had a severe pain in his stomach. Therefore he looked at his friends and said, "I, whom you call a god, am commanded now to leave this life, while Providence thus rebukes the lying words you just now said to me." After five days, exhausted from the stomach pain, he died, at the age of fifty-three (Adapted from *Antiquities of the Jews* 19:8:2).** This report is similar enough to confirm the reliability of the B'rit Chadashah, yet different enough to show that the descriptions are independent

of each other.[268]

Immediately, an angel of the Lord struck him down – because he did not give God the glory (Isaiah 42:8a). The opponent of the gospel was judged, while **Peter** was freed. Justice and grace appear side-by-side. **Ha'Shem's** response was swift, **and Herod Agrippa was eaten by worms** (Greek: *skolakobrotos*, meaning tapeworms) **and died (12:23).** And **the death** of **Agrippa** allowed **Peter** to return to **Jerusalem**, and there we find **him** next (see **Bs – The Counsel at Jerusalem**).

I cannot help but see in **King Herod** an illustration of the future **man of lawlessness (Second Thessalonians 2:3)** who will one day rule the world and persecute **God's** people (see the commentary on **Revelation Ds – The Woman and the Dragon**). **The antichrist** will make **himself** like **god** and will command the worship of the whole world. But **Yeshua Messiah** will return and judge **him** and those who follow **him** (see the commentary on **Revelation Fo – The Great White Throne Judgment**).[269]

Indeed, one cannot fail to admire the literary skill with which **Luke** describes the complete reversal of the Church's situation. At the beginning of **Chapter 12, Herod** is on a rampage – arresting, persecuting, and executing the leaders of the Messianic community; at the end **he** is **struck down** and **dies**. The chapter opens with **James dead**, **Peter in prison** and **Herod** triumphing; it closes with **Herod dead**, **Peter** free, and **the word of God** triumphing. Such is the power of **God** to overthrow hostile human plans and to establish **His** own in their place.[270]

Again, **Luke** keeps us on track with the growth of the Church by reporting that despite the furious opposition of **the Adversary, the word of God kept on growing and multiplying. And Barnabas and Sha'ul returned to Jerusalem** after **the death** of **Herod** to distribute the Jewish relief fund from the church at Antioch for **the famine (11:29-30), bringing along Barnabas'** cousin **John, who was also called Mark,** with **them (12:24-25). It is right to see 12:24-25 as both a summary statement meant to round off Luke's account of the Messianic community in Jerusalem, and a transition statement that provides reasonable clues to the development of Luke's material that follows. Luke is about to describe that great leap forward that we call the First Missionary Journey, where the gospel will be declared to the Gentiles.**