

SUNDAY SCHOOL MATERIALS FOR ADULTS

LESSON 11



HEROD'S DESTRUCTION

Scripture Texts: Acts 12:19-25; Proverbs 6:16-17

Herod, King of Judaea, Samaria, and other dominions of Rome, had been persecuting the church at Jerusalem. He had killed James and imprisoned Peter. God miraculously rescued Peter.

How much we sometimes pay for worthless trifles in this life. In our lesson we are told of people who gave honor to Herod, but it was only lip service offered to gain favor for them. It was empty flattery. It was wrong. Yet for receiving this blasphemous praise of the people, he paid his soul. We see the result of pride in the heart of man.

MEMORY VERSE: *Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name.*

—1 Chronicles 16:29a

DAILY READINGS:

- Mon.—**Galatians 6:1-10** Self-deception.
- Tue.—**Romans 12:1-10** Careful of conduct.
- Wed.—**Proverbs 21:1-12** Treasure of the wicked.
- Thu.—**Proverbs 22:1-16** The value of a good name.
- Fri.—**Psalms 40:1-10** No respect for the proud.

Devotional Reading: **Matthew 23:1-12** The humble exalted.

Seeking Herod's Favor

Acts 12:19-20 Not finding his prisoner, Peter, Herod ordered the keepers executed. Then, leaving bereaved hearts behind him, he went down to Caesarea, where was his official residence. **Herod was highly displeased with them of Tyre and Sidon**, cities farther north along the coast. They came to him from there, used the clever strategy of first making friends with Blastus, Herod's chamberlain, then worked up to desire peace with the king himself. This was not because they admired Herod or desired his personal friendship. It was **because their country was nourished by the king's country**. It was for their own selfish advantage, for their economic welfare. As saints, we must never join hands with the world for any personal benefit or gain.

Herod's Oration

Acts 12:21-22 Upon a set day—arranged and announced—**Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne**—with all the power of state and much pomp and show—**made an oration**—an elaborate public discourse treating an important subject in a formal and dignified manner. **The people gave a shout**—applause. The praise was personal and the very highest. **It is the voice of a god, and not of a man**. It was not sincere, it was flattery, designed to win Herod's favor for themselves. It was blasphemy. It was wrong for them to give and wrong for Herod to accept. Raising any person or thing to the place of God is idolatry. It is wrong to take glory to ourselves. All glory belongs to God, but Herod took it to himself. To speak words of thanks and appreciation to our brethren for a good work is not giving them God's glory. This is part of the debt of love we owe them.

Here is a man, a strict keeper of the Law ceremonies, raised to political power and honor, bound by sin, trying to rise on false glory to a place of godliness. He was building on a false foundation which would not hold, and he fell. His house was built on the sand. When it fell, as all such must, great was the fall of it. Read **Galatians 6:3**. Look not with scorn. Look not with self-righteousness, thinking it could not happen to you.

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Herod's Punishment

Acts 12:23 Immediately—usually the bulk of sin's punishment is deferred, but it is always certain, unless forgiven. **The angel of the Lord smote him.** Angels are God's servants, sent sometimes to bless, sometimes to punish. God punished Herod's sin at once. Why? **Because he gave not God the glory.** He accepted the blasphemous praise of the people. He took it as being due him. He did not refuse it and pass it on to God. He **gave up the ghost**—destroyed physically and spiritually. He paid with his soul.

We are not kings. Most of us do not make orations to a nation. But there is a danger facing all of us. Herod's trouble did not start in what he did. It lay deeper. He had much pride and self-righteousness and arrogance in his heart. The capacity for pride seems overgrown in human nature. It lies in every unregenerate heart (**Mark 7:21-23**). It is easily revived by success or praise. To see the ever-threatening danger, look at the number of sad wrecks it is causing. Often a talented, promising one lets success "go to his head" and falls from usefulness, a victim to pride. We can be proud of something or proud of nothing, proud of our pride or proud of our humility. Whatever the form, it is still pride. Pride in the heart is sin (**Proverbs 21:4**).

The Sin of Pride

Proverbs 6:16-17 These six things doth the Lord hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: A proud look . . . (See also **Proverbs 8:13**.) Pride is selfish. It is desire for glory. It is an overvaluation of the esteem of one's self. It is a **lust of the flesh, and is not of the Father (1 John 2:16)**. All glory and honor belong to God (**Psalms 115:1**). To take any upon ourselves is stealing from Him. All the good that we have comes from Him.

The Remedy for Pride

Jesus' warning to watch needs to be diligently obeyed in the area of pride. Many saved ones have been lost over this temptation, blindly going on thinking themselves rich, when really they are **wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked (Revelation 3:17-18)**. This need not be. Jesus stands ready to save to the uttermost. He asks us to buy of Him **gold tried in the fire**, real, spiritual riches. He will lift you out of the mire of sin to His plane of salvation. He will cleanse the heart of pride, arrogance, and every defilement. Jesus Christ is the only remedy.

Success of the Gospel Continued

Acts 12:24-25 But the word of God grew and multiplied. This is not a change of subject. The conjunction *but* connects it with what went before, connects it in contrast. Herod had set out to destroy the Gospel by killing its promoters. He has gone down in defeat, while the Gospel lives and grows. **Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem to Antioch, when they had fulfilled their ministry** of delivering the gift from the Antioch church to the church in Judaea. They took with them John Mark as they continued the spread of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Fighting against the power of the Gospel is a losing battle.

JUST A THOUGHT

Never forget that the way up is down.

This lesson is adapted from a lesson by Mary Lehmann.
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