

Introduction: The madness of the ungodly causes them to rush away into their own destruction. You remember that Isaac had two sons, Esau and Jacob. Before they were born, God said that the elder, Esau, would serve the younger, an election that was not because of works, but because of grace. Like their father, Isaac, Jacob was chosen over his elder brother, that we might know that the election is of grace and not of works.

But neither Ishmael nor Esau were content with the election of grace and contended with God over it. Ishmael mocked Isaac and Esau tried to kill Jacob. The Edomites, the descendants of Esau, became a great nation and warred against David and Israel, but were finally subdued by David and brought under tribute.

Many years later, under the influence of Rome, the descendants of Esau gained great power and ascendancy in Israel. Herod the Great was an Edomite, who pretended to worship the God of Israel. He was made king over Judah, but he knew he was a usurper without any right to the throne, and this is the reason he was inflamed at the words of the Wise Men, “Where is he that is born king of the Jews. We have seen his star in the east and are come to worship Him.”

Unlike the star that led the Wise Men, the star of the Edomites would be like a meteorite, that flashes randomly across the sky, makes a great light and noise, and then disappears forever. Act 12 speaks of the confrontation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ with the grandson of Herod the Great

- I. Shall God’s Word Be Bound? This is the first thing that we shall see. Herod Agrippa I would bind the word of God in the person of Peter. But he should have stopped a minute to think about it. His family had not fared well in the conflict with Jesus of Nazareth.
 - A. First there was his grandfather Herod the Great that we spoke of.
 1. He was a master politician who had curried favor with Rome and was rewarded by being named king of the Jews. He pretended to love the law and the temple, but was very cruel and vicious.
 2. Two things brought him into favor with the Jews:
 - a. The relief during the time of a great famine. He sold all his wealth in order to feed the people. Human nature, even the most vicious can do great humanitarian deeds, but this does not bring favor with God.
 - b. The building of the great temple at Jerusalem, replacing the one of Ezra and Nehemiah, but pretending to be honoring to Moses and the law. Though huge in structure and magnificent in glory, yet spiritually there remained only a tiny image of the original worship of the Lord, for the traditions of men had replaced true reverence for the law of God, which is of the soul and spirit, and not of the flesh.

3. His defeat at the power of the Christ Child. He sought to destroy the kingdom of God in its infancy, when Christ was still a babe. He destroyed all the babes in the region, an act of cruelty that probably appeared insignificant to the people of Judea in terms of the other monstrosities that he committed. But Jesus escaped to Israel with Mary and Joseph and returned to Nazareth after Herod was dead. Score: Jesus Christ 1, House of Herod 0
- B. The Herodian of note is Herod the Tetrarch. He is known as the Tetrarch because he was not really king.
1. He stole the wife of the rightful king, Philip, and was reproved of John the Baptist. He beheaded John but was very sentimental about it. He was a thoroughly disgusting man and quarreled with Pilate before they were reconciled at the trial of Christ.
 2. He refused to give judgment and sent Christ back to Pilate, after ridiculing Jesus' claim to be king. He clothed Christ in purple robes and mocked Him.
 3. He knew Christ was innocent, and so did Pilate, but Pilate ordered Jesus to be crucified, and so it happened.
 4. In the aftermath, Pilate was disgraced and Herod lost his throne. Christ rose from the dead and took the throne of David in Heaven. Herod's wife, whom he had stolen persuaded him to go to Rome to seek the title of king; he lost the battle over the title and lost what he had and was replaced. Score: Jesus of Nazareth 2 House of Herod 0
- C. But folly does not know its limit. We read of a third member of the house of Herod, the grandson of Herod the Great, Herod Philip I Agrippa.
1. He decided that he would please the apostate Jews, so he killed James the brother of John, and put Peter into Prison. Like Herod the Great and Herod the Tetrarch before him, his true desire was the silence the word of the Gospel and the words of Christ.
 2. Because Christ is in heaven and not accessible to mortal men, they seek to destroy His messengers: the most prominent in history was Peter, the rock.
 3. Peter is placed in prison, chained between two soldiers, guarded by sixteen soldiers. Foolish man, Herod. Do you not remember your father and grandfather. What can chains of iron do against the gospel of Jesus Christ?
 4. We read the story: the angel appeared, delivered Peter, who is brought back to the church.
 5. Except for his appearance at the Council of Jerusalem to recount the conversion of Cornelius, this is the last appearance of Peter in the book of Acts. After this, the attention turns to the Gentiles and the ministry of Paul.
 6. But in this incident, God shows how futile the opposition of kings and earthly powers will be against the power of the Gospel of Jesus and His apostles, for Peter represents the gospel ministry here, which cannot fail, nor can it be silenced.
 7. After this Herod Agrippa I, dies a horrible death, as we will see in a moment. Score Jesus of Nazareth 3, House of Herod 0
- D. There is one more: Herod Agrippa II, who ruled until the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. He was confederate with the Romans and waged war against his own people and this apostate family of the house of Esau finally comes to an end, as the city is destroyed

and the temple built by Herod the Great is destroyed with the aid of his own offspring. But the destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem would lead to the dispersal of the church throughout the world and the evangelization of the world. Final score to this point: Jesus of Nazareth 4; House of Herod 0. In the words of Peter in Acts 12:11 “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.”

II. Shall God Hear Prayers? Acts 12:3.

A. This was immediate and most zealous prayers.

B. They were evidently not praying for Peter’s release.

1. They knew the prophecy of Jesus concerning the death of Peter. John 21:18,19
2. I have an idea that they were praying that God would give Peter grace and mercy and sustain him during what might be his last trial.
3. They thought that Rhoda was mad when she told the praying saints that Peter stood without the gate. I do not think that the church lacked faith; they lacked knowledge.
4. I think they prayed with faith. Sometimes you do not have the knowledge to pray as you ought, but do you have faith to pray at all? Sometimes we pray, not knowing what to pray for, but we think thus: “I do not know what to pray for. I do not know what your will is? I do not know what to ask for. But I do have faith to pray. You have told us to pray for all things without ceasing, and Lord I believe. I have faith that you know what I do not know. I have faith to believe that you have power to do what You will to do. So I will pray for you have said that the effectual fervent prayer of the godly availeth much. Amen, Lord Jesus.”

C. God answered them above what they could ask or think.

1. He delivered Peter and brought him to them.
2. He continued the madness of Herod who had the soldiers slain. As if it was their fault.
3. How cruel and wicked the benefactors of the world can be. What injustice is done in the name of worldly pomp and glory.

III. Shall Rulers be Gods?

A. Herod returned to Caesarea, for he did not live among the Jesus, but among his masters the Romans who had a colony at Caesarea.

1. He solved a quarrel that he had with Phoenicia, whose interest was to be friends with Herod. They sued for peace and Herod worked out a peace plan that was admired by all. Nowadays he probably would receive a Nobel Peace Prize.
2. As the custom was and always will be, on the occasion perhaps of the signing of the peace accord, Herod made a great speech.
3. It was a good speech and no doubt stirred the admiration of the crowd, who gave a great shout, “It is the voice of a god,” they said, no doubt overwhelmed with the magnificence of Herod’s royal robes and pomp and circumstance, his throne, and the eloquence and substance of his speech.
4. But he gave no glory to God, but took all the credit to himself. This cannot pass.

- B. A horrible death, and the Holy Spirit gave the reason for it, for we can know such things only by revelation: “The angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the Glory.” Josephus records that on that day Herod said, ““I whom you call a god am ordered to depart this life immediately. Providence thus instantly reproves the lying words you just now addressed to me, and I who was by you called immortal am immediately to be hurried away by death.” Thus fell he whom the world called Agrippa the Great! a monument to warn proud men, “Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth” (Isaiah 45:9). [Fausset]
- C. Aftermath: “The Word of God grew and multiplied.” Amen and Amen.

Application: There are two:

1. No earthly power can keep Jesus Christ and His gospel from accomplishing His eternal purpose in the salvation of His people.
2. It is God who does the work: Not Peter, who slept through the whole thing [vs. 11]; not the church, who didn't know what to pray for.
3. What is our job: trust, pray, and obey. It is God that does the work. Sometimes He tells us what to do, and the results seem to be by our hand; sometimes He tell us what to do and the results seem to be both of ourselves and of God; sometimes He does it by Himself. In every case, however, we are to give Him the glory and honor, for even if He works by our hands, it is God who does the work. Amen and Amen.