

A Tyrant Struck Down.
Acts 12:20-24
Sunday morning, August 29,2010.

I. The conflict with Tyre and Sidon.

- A. Following the escape of Peter from Prison, and from Herod, Herod had searched for him in Jerusalem, and not found him. He examined the guards, but even under the threat of death they could bring him no closer to understanding what happened to Peter. Such were this tyrant's ways that he simply had these soldiers put to death. Then he went to Caesarea.
- B. Caesarea was a seaport south of today's Haifa, and some 75 and 100 miles south of the cities of Tyre and Sidon. Caesarea had been built by Herod the Great, grandfather to the present Herod Agrippa I, between 25 and 13 B.C. It was named after the Roman Ceasar Augustus.
- C. Each year at the beginning of August (also named after Caesar Augustus whose birthday was at the beginning of that month) the city of Caesarea held public games in honor of the Roman emperor. Herod, who normally lived in Jerusalem, went to Caesarea to preside over these games; this according to the historian Josephus, who also records the event of the demise of Herod in great detail.
- D. We know nothing about the cause of Herod's anger with the people of Tyre and Sidon. Both Luke and Josephus tell us that he was very angry with them.
- E. Tyre and Sidon were ancient port cities located on the coast of today's Lebanon. They were important centers of trade and commerce, but not of agriculture. For their food they depended on the regions of Galilee, Samaria and Judea, which were ruled by Herod. As such it was in the best interest of Tyre and Sidon to seek out conditions for peace with Herod.
- F. Tyre and Sidon sought to bring about this peace through the mediation of Blastus who was the personal attendant of Herod and also a friend of the people of Tyre and Sidon.
- G. Herod had chosen to address this conflict and the conditions for peace during a speech he would make during the games in the amphitheater in Caesarea. That is the reason why so many people from Tyre and Sidon were present in Caesarea at this time, and why they shouted: "The voice of a god and not of a man!"

II. Herod struck down.

Here is an account of Herod's death as it was recorded by the historian Josephus

- A. The day was August 1st. It was a beautiful summer day at the amphitheater in the city of Caesarea. The theater was full of people. At center stage stood a throne, seated on which was Herod, dressed in royal robes, which were woven with threads of pure silver.
- B. Herod started his address, and in much the same way we would use applause in our times during public speeches such as the state of the union address, these people would use shouts such as the one recorded: "The voice of a god and not of a man!" It would appear that the people of Tyre and Sidon got a favorable reply from Herod if these shouts were any indication thereof.
- C. Herod did nothing to restrain the impious flattery of this pagan crowd. Rather he

- seems to have reveled in their flattery; basking in the glory of the moment.
- D. Before Herod could finish his speech he collapsed and fell off his throne to the ground in great agony caused by abdominal pain. Herod had to be carried out of the amphitheater to his residence, where he spent five days in terrible agony. Herod died on August 6th. He had been eaten alive from the inside by maggots.
 - E. Even the heathen of that day believed that the gods struck Herod down for accepting the praise that rightfully belonged to them.
 - F. Luke uses the same verb translated “struck him” which he used earlier in the chapter of the angel who “struck” Peter on the side to awaken him. The same divine touch can have such different outcomes depending on its intent. Let us always position ourselves with humility before the Lord so that His touching us may be one of grace and not of judgment.
 - G. Antiochus Epiphanes, the Syrian king and enemy of the Jews, who defiled the temple in Jerusalem during the inter-testamental period, died a similar death.

III. A lesson from the people of Tyre and Sidon.

- A. We, like the people of Tyre and Sidon, have offended our king and by nature His wrath abides on us because of our sin. He is justly angry with us.
- B. Our country, like the cities of Tyre and Sidon, is supplied by our King’s country. It is by the Lord God’s good pleasure that we have what we have.
- C. It is in the best interest of us, as it was of the Tyrians and Sidonians, to seek out conditions of peace by way of a mediator.
- D. We, like the people of Tyre and Sidon, have a mediator; one who is in the bosom of the Father and is intimately acquainted with Him, but one who is also the friend of sinners; even our Lord Jesus Christ.
- E. As the people of Tyre and Sidon embraced the provisions of peace set before them by Herod, and did so with laud acclaim, so we would do well to embrace the provisions of peace proclaimed to us from the lips of our King in the gospel. “Repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.”

IV. A lesson from Herod.

- A. Herod died a terrible and agonizing death, yet this ordeal ended in five days.
- B. The Lord Jesus warned us about “a worm that will not die, and a fire that will not be quenched.”
- C. The lord spoke to us about a land that is not supplied by “the king’s country,” as were Tyre and Sidon. All supplies are withheld. It is a land that is typified by “Gehenna” or the valley of Hinnom, Jerusalem’s garbage dump. Anything taken there was either burned or composted by worms. It is called “outer darkness;” the absence of any and all good. Mark 9:42-48.
- D. Herod did not take his rightful place before his King, but he usurped His glory; and the maggots that consumed his insides were only a foretaste of the worm that would ravage his heart and mind for all eternity.
- E. The Lord’s supper is a time where we may find and take our rightful place before the Lord once again; a place of thankful humility. The Lord’s table is where our country is supplied by the King’s country. Blessed are those who are invited to this table and learn to eat from it with a thankful heart.