

## The Persecution Under King Herod.

Acts 12:1-5

Sunday morning, July 18, 2010.

The book of Acts has three major parts to it. These three parts relate to the progress of the gospel: 1. Beginning in Jerusalem Ch. 1-7

This part closes with the death of Stephen.

2. Going to Samaria Ch. 8-12.

This part ends with the death of James and Peter's imprisonment.

3. To the ends of the earth. Ch. 13-28.

This part ends with Paul's imprisonment in Rome.

We come now to the final chapter of the second part: James' death, and Peter's imprisonment.

### I. The dynasty of the Herods.

This persecution was initiated by "Herod the King."

A number of different Herod's are to be distinguished in the New Testament..

A. The Herod who murdered the children in Bethlehem at the time of Jesus' birth.

This was "Herod the Great."

B. The Herod who beheaded John the Baptist, and to whom Jesus was sent by Pilate at the time of his death. This was Herod Antipas, son of Herod the great.

C. The Herod who killed James and imprisoned Peter was Herod Agrippa I. He was a grandson of Herod the Great, and a nephew to Herod Antipas.

Through his friendship with the Roman Emperors he had gained authority over all of Galilee and Judea. According to the historian Josephus, Herod was always looking for ways to gain favor with the Jews, which would make them easier to rule over.

Hence the beheading of James and the imprisonment of Peter, with a view toward executing Him after Passover. He did so "because he saw that it pleased the Jews."

Vs. 3.

### II. The apostle James.

A. He was the brother of the apostle John. Together they were "the sons of Zebedee."

B. With John and Peter, James made up the "inner circle" of the Lord's disciples. He Was with John and Peter on the Mount of Transfiguration The three of them were more closely by the Lord's side as He went into the Garden of Gethsemane to pray, even as the Lord had left the other nine more nearly to the entrance of the garden. These three continued together as the pillars of the early church.

C. The mother of James and John was Salome. In all likelihood Salome was the sister of Mary, the mother of the Lord Jesus, making James and John the Lord's cousins, and Salome His aunt. Salome also brought the spices to prepare the Lord's body for burial.

D. In Matthew 20:20-23 it was Salome who approached the Lord together with her two sons James and John, requesting that her two sons might sit on the Lord's right hand and left hand in His kingdom.

The Lord answered speaking about "His cup" and "His baptism." Language

referring to His impending sufferings.

“Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?” Matt. 20:22. A negative answer is implied.

1. There is a sense in which believers can never know the sufferings of Christ. The sufferings for sin which He suffered on our behalf were uniquely His. “The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed.” Isa. 53:5. In this sense we can never know Christ’s cup or baptism. Which is the point of the gospel; Christ came to drink that cup for us. The punishment, which the Father by way of the divine law exacted from Him, we can never know.
2. There is another layer to this suffering however. These are the sufferings which sinful men inflicted upon Him by way of their hostility, antagonism and opposition; and not only on Him, but also on all those who by faith are united to Him.
3. In this latter sense James and John would be drinking of Christ’s cup, and they would be baptized by His baptism. It is this cup and baptism which now come home to James and Peter.

### III. Able to save to the uttermost...

- A. The story about James and Peter is one of two extremes.
  1. In Peter’s case we are shown how nothing can stop the spread of the gospel and the labors of God’s servants. “The Lord’s arm is not shortened that it can not save.” Isaiah 59:1.  
And “he is able to save to the uttermost...” that is body and soul. Hebr. 7:25.
  2. In James’ case there were no angels to rescue James; only the executioner and his sword, to take his head.  
What are we to make of this?
- B. Last week we saw that “*The things, necessary for life and godliness, which we are unable to provide for ourselves by the use of ordinary means, God Himself will provide for us by His special providence.*” Peter proves the truth of this statement, but what about James?  
This truth governs our lives upon the earth as we live them in humble service to the Lord. But when the time comes for us to leave this world, and to slip through the veil into the presence of the Lord, at such a time the Lord withdraws the means which ordinarily sustain our lives upon the earth. This is what happened to James. At some point this happens to us all.
- C. What do you want the outward circumstances of that moment to be like?  
Do you not want to know what is coming to you? Or do you want to leave this world like a candle slowly burns itself out?  
It is best to leave these externals with the Lord; He is a good shepherd.
- D. What about the inward circumstances of your heart?
  1. Pray for the grace by which you would glorify God in your dying. John 21:19
  2. Pray for a willingness to leave this world. Phil. 1:23
  3. Pray for a quiet confidence in the Lord and surrender to Him.  
“Father into your hands I commit my spirit.” Luke 23:46.
  4. Pray for clarity of mind. (This is not given to all). Matt. 27:34.