

A MINISTRY FOR HUNGRY SAINTS

UNDER THE EXALTED CHRIST, THE GOSPEL BEGINS TO SPREAD

THE ACTS

† THE BOOK OF ACTS

OF THE APOSTLES

WORD OF TRUTH MINISTRIES, Associated

An overview of the Book of Acts, by Given O. Blakely

ACTS 5:31-32

"Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are His witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey Him."

"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." (Acts 4:12)

Lesson #55

COMMENTARY ON: 12:18-25

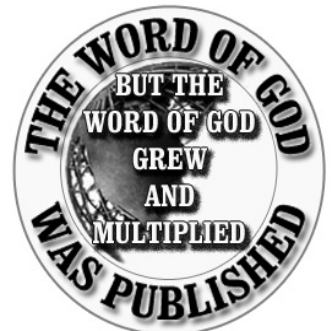
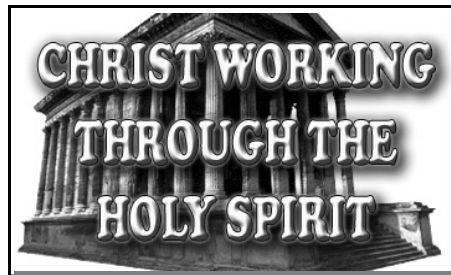
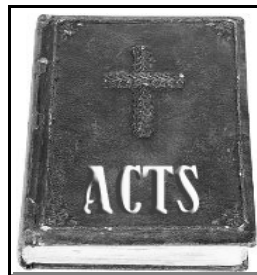
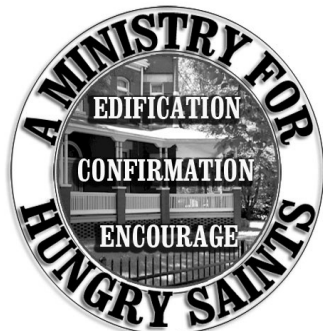
THE INSOLENCE OF HEROD REWARDED

The deliverance of Peter has taken place without any of the prison keepers knowing what had happened. It is not until morning that any apparent check is made, or any effort expended to account for Peter. Everyone involved had complete trust in the system put in place by Herod, and there was no thought of it being in any way deficient. However, their trust in the arm of the flesh will prove to be in vain, while Peter's trust in God will be fully justified. There is a sense in which this text provides a sterling commentary on the two types of people who dwell in the earth: those who by Jesus *"believe in God"* (1 Pet 1:21), and those who *"trust in chariots"* and *"in horses"* (Psa 20:7) – wheat and tares, the godly and the ungodly, those who are reconciled to God and those who are alienated from the life of God, those who love God, and those who love the world. These live for different reasons, and are anticipating significantly different things.

ACTS 17:26-27

"And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him, though He be not far from every one of us."

"... and ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." (Acts 1:8)

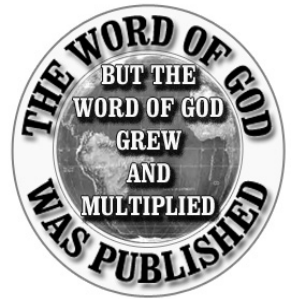


Since May, 1993, a ministry instituted for the encouragement of believers in Christ



The Book of Acts

Lesson Number 55



A MINISTRY INITIATED IN MAY 1993, AND DEDICATED TO STRENGTHENING THOSE WHO ARE IN CHRIST, BY BUILDING THEIR FAITH, ENHANCING THEIR JOY, AND STABILIZING THEIR HOPE, ENABLING THEM TO WORK OUT THEIR SALVATION WITH FEAR AND TREMBLING.

TRANSLATION LEGEND: ALT = Analytical-Literal Translation (2005), AMPLIFIED = Amplified Bible (1965), ASV = American Standard Version (1901), BBE=Bible in Basic English (1949), DRA = Douay-Rheims (1899), ERV = English Revised Version (1885), ESV = English Stand Version (2001), GNB = Good News (1966), GWN = God'S Word (1995), IE = International English, ISV = International Standard Version (1967), JPS = Jewish Publication Society (1917), KJV = King James Version (1611), L.LITV = Literal Translation of the Bible ((1976), LIVING = Living Bible (1971), MKJV = Modern KJV (1962), MONTGOMERY = Montgomery's New Testament (2001), MRD = Peshitta-James Murdock Translation (1852), NAB = New American Bible (2002), NASB = New American Standard Bible (1977), NAU = New American Standard Bible (1995), NIB = New International Bible, NIV = New International Version (1984), NJB = New Jerusalem Bible (1985), NKJV = New King James Version (1979), NLT =New Living Translation (1996), NRSV = New Revised Standard Version (1989), PHILLIPS = J B Phillips New Testament (1962), PNT = BISHOP'S New Testament (1595), RSV = Revised Standard Version (1952), TNK = JPS Tanakj (1985), Webster = The Webster Bible (1833),WEYMOUTH = Weymouth's New Testament (1903), WILLIAMS = William's New Testament (1937), TYNDALE = Tyndale's Bible (1526), WYCLIFFE = Wycliffe New Testament (1382), YLT =Young's Literal Translation (1862).

----- Lexicon and Bible Translation Codes with Identification -----

LEXICON LEGEND: FRIEBERG = Friberg Lexicon, UBS = UBS Lexicon, LOUW-NIDA = Louw-Nida Lexicon, LIDDELL SCOTT = Liddell Scott Lexicon, THAYER = Thayer's Greek Lexicon, LEH = LEH Lexicon, GINGRICH = Gingrich Lexicon

THE INSPIRED RECORD OF HOW THE ENTHRONED CHRIST, BY MEANS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, WORKED THROUGH HIS HOLY APOSTLES AND GODLY MEN, TO SPREAD THE WORD OF THE GOSPEL THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE WORLD, AND TO BRING EDIFICATION AND STABILITY TO MEMBERS OF CHRIST'S BODY.

DISCLAIMER: The quoting of other translations is not to be taken as a condoning of them. My purpose is rather to show the remarkable diversity, and sometimes outright contradictions that exist among these various versions of Scripture. Our understanding of the Word of God ultimately depends upon our comprehension of the Lord Himself and His eternal purpose. Where this understanding is not present, we are shut up to scholasticism and conjecture, both of which are of the world, not of God.

THE INSOLENCES OF HEROD REWARDED

^{12:18} Now as soon as it was day, there was no small stir among the soldiers, what was become of Peter. ¹⁹ And when Herod had sought for him, and found him not, he examined the keepers, and commanded that they should be put to death. And he went down from Judaea to Caesarea, and there abode. ²⁰ And Herod was highly displeased with them of Tyre and Sidon: but they came with one accord to him, and, having made Blastus the king's chamberlain their friend, desired peace; because their country was nourished by the king's country. ²¹ And upon a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne, and made an oration unto them. ²² And the people gave a shout, saying, It is the voice of a god, and not of a man. ²³ And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost. ²⁴ But the word of God grew and multiplied. ²⁵ And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem, when they had fulfilled their ministry, and took with them John, whose surname was Mark." (Acts 12:18-25)

INTRODUCTION

The deliverance of Peter has taken place without any of the prison keepers knowing what had happened. It is not until morning that any apparent check is made, or any effort expended to account for Peter. There is a sense in which this is the way in which all who are of the world relate to the ways and

works of God – they are unaware of them, like men who are sleeping in the night. Paul well wrote, *“For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night”* (1 Thess 5:7). This involves more than the time when there is no solar light. **Sin causes men to become blind, so that**

everything around them is *“night.”* Even what they think they see does not appear to them as it really is. Men create their own form of artificial moral light that they imagine causes things to be seen more clearly. It may take the form of a system, or a philosophy, or a *“science falsely so called”* (1 Tim 6:20). They

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entertain erroneous ideas of men, thinking them to be a higher form of animal life rather than a reflection of Divine life. They may look at the world and everything in it as something that is evolving with neither management nor purpose. They may embrace the thought that only the worldly-fit survive, and those conceived by the world to be weak are destined to failure. **But all of these are erroneous ideas that cannot emit light to the mind or hope to the heart.** They are like Herod, his prison, and his prison keepers. They distort the vision of the people, bringing no clarity to life.

Everyone involved in the incarceration of Peter had complete trust in the system put in place by Herod. There was no thought of it being in any way deficient. The cell was secure. The restraining chains were in place. Peter had been placed between two guards. There were two other posts to guarantee no intruder could access the prisoner, and the prisoner himself could not escape. In addition, there was the large and formidable gate that isolated the prison complex from society. The security of the prisoner was unquestionably sure – **at least that is what they thought.**

However, their trust in the arm of the flesh will prove to be in vain. **God has determined that those who trust in anything or anyone other than Himself**

WILL find that trust to be vain. *“There is no king saved by the multitude of an host: a mighty man is not delivered by much strength. An horse is a vain thing for safety: neither shall he deliver any by his great strength”* (Psa 33:16-17). *“Lo, thou trustest in the staff of this broken reed, on Egypt: whereon if a man lean, it will go into his hand, and pierce it: so is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all that trust in him”* (Isa 36:6). Insightful souls have confessed, *“vain is the help of man”* (Psa 60:11; 108:12). Jeremiah affirmed, *“Truly in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills, and from the multitude of mountains”* (Jer 3:23). This principle is true for all kinds of erroneous thought, whether it be humanly conceived religious systems, medical answers, political strategies, scientific discoveries, educational developments, or military strength. **God will allow none of these things, or anything like them, to take His place!**

On the other hand, Peter’s trust in God will be fully justified. In him the saying will be fulfilled, *“Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him”* (Psa 2:12). And again, *“O Thou that savest by Thy right hand them which put their trust in Thee from those that rise up against them”* (Psa 17:7). And again, *“Every word of God is pure: He is a shield unto them that put their trust in Him.”* (Prov 30:5).

The apostles confirm that this is especially true of those who put their trust in Christ. After identifying Christ as the stumbling stone to which Isaiah referred, Paul wrote *“As it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumblingstone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on Him shall not be ashamed”* (Rom 9:33). Following his delineation of the role of the Gospel in our salvation he wrote, *“For the scripture saith,*

Whosoever believeth on Him shall not be ashamed” (Rom 10:11). It is ever true, *“But let all those that put their trust in Thee rejoice: let them ever shout for joy, because Thou defendest them: let them also that love Thy name be joyful in Thee”* (Psa 5:11),

There is a sense in which this text provides a sterling commentary on the two types of people who dwell in the earth: those who by Jesus *“believe in God”* (1 Pet 1:21), and those who *“trust in chariots”* and *“in horses”* (Psa 20:7) – wheat and tares, the godly and the ungodly, those who are reconciled to God and those who are alienated from the life of God, those who love God, and those who love the world. **These live for different reasons, and are anticipating significantly different things.** The godly think differently, and approach life differently. It is because they *“know the Lord,”* and have been persuaded that He is *“above all”* (Eph 1:21; 4:6,10), and *“over all”* (Rom 9:5; Rom 10:12; Eph 1:22).

It is one thing to have such affirmations in your creed. It is quite another to have them dwelling *“richly”* in your heart (Col 3:16). **Part of ingesting the Word of God is appropriating these affirmations of absolute Divine superiority.** Jesus Christ, for example, is the *“only Potentate”* (1 Tim 6:15). At the level at which He reigns, there are no competitors – not even Satan, who is *“the god of this world”* (2 Cor 4:4). **WE may be in a competitive arena, but the Father and the Son are not!** Since Jesus has been enthroned, there are no battles in heaven! Furthermore, orders that are issued from there cannot be effectively contravened on earth. If the Lord *commands deliverance* from heaven (Isa 44:4), it cannot be hindered, postponed, or nullified upon earth. If God sends a *“strong delusion”* (2 Thess 2:11), it will

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be effective with no possibility of being deterred.

The truth of this is being lived out in our text. Peter trusts in the Lord, and he is delivered. Herod trusts in flesh, and his mandate is overthrown. The prison keepers trusted in the strength of chains, the superiority of militia, and the restraining power of iron – but it was all in vain.

THE VANITY OF HUMAN SYSTEMS

One of the tragic consequences of relying upon systems that have been contrived by men is that it removes the necessity of trusting in the Lord. I am painfully aware that it is not *religiously correct* to say such things, but they must be said. As Paul well stated, there is a “*show of wisdom*” in the strategies of men (Col 2:19). It seems to me that the time has come to emphasize that **what cannot reconcile us to God, by that very circumstance, has no power to recover us from sin in any sense, or restore to us an imagined control of our lives.** Whatever cannot take away sin, cannot keep sin away. If it cannot cleanse the conscience in the first place, it cannot restore one. If it cannot deliver us the power of the devil, it cannot save us from any of the powers he controls. That seems very elementary to me, but it is becoming increasingly difficult to make this point in the modern church. Through demonic doctrines, Satan has brought many professing believers to adopt, what I will call, a *YABUT* theology. That is a view that, after hearing of a Sovereign God, a Savior who is King of kings, and a power that is exceeding, responds by saying “Yea, but . . .” Perhaps it is “But there is some good in what they say.” Or, “But, they use Scripture in their plans.” Or “But, there is nothing wrong with using a system that works.” Or, “But, they have done so much good.”

If men are to live in Divine favor, they must be brought to the point where what is said of the entire household of faith can be said of them: “*For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh*” (Phil 3:3). These are not goals, but are realities produced by salvation.

⇒ **“THE CIRCUMCISION.”** Other versions read, “*the true circumcision,*”^{NASB} “*the real circumcision,*”^{ESV} and “*true people of the circumcision.*”^{NJB} This refers to “*the circumcision of Christ*” (Col 2:11), in which the “*body of the sins of the flesh*” are cut away from our essential persons. That is, our basic propensity is now toward the Lord, and not our bodies and the nature associated with them.



⇒ **“WORSHIP GOD IN THE SPIRIT.”** Our lives are now lived in service to God. We no longer live to please ourselves, but offer our bodies and lives to the Lord. This is done in the power of the Spirit, and is like the offering of life itself, as seen in the scapegoat and living bird that were not killed, yet were offered to the Lord (Lev 14:6-7, 51-53; 16:8,10,26).

⇒ **“REJOICE IN CHRIST JESUS.”** This is not something believers should do, but is the expression of their basic persons. Rejoicing in Jesus is the expression of their faith, and it is why they will not give their hearts to anything or anyone other than Him.

⇒ **“HAVE NO CONFIDENCE IN THE FLESH.”** Having been delivered from the dominion and contamination of “*the flesh,*” they have no intention of trusting it again. If it can be traced back to Adam, through which both sin and death entered into the world, they will not trust it – regardless of the form that it takes.

There is no possibility that someone lacking these things is a genuine Christian. It is possible for those who “*are not far from the kingdom of God*” (Mk 12:34) to aspire to have these qualities. **However, they are not actually possessed until men are delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of God’s dear Son** (Col 1:13). When this condition is realized, the same thing that put them into Christ causes them to be characterized as this text affirms. This is not descriptive of a category believers, but of the body of Christ itself. These realities account for the calm of Peter, and for his deliverance as well. The lack of these things account for the frustration of Herod’s purpose, and the obtuseness of the soldiers.

ONE MORE AFFIRMATION

It is necessary to once again affirm the spiritual realities that have been lived out in the deliverance of Peter. **The individual who has been saved, or delivered from the guilt and power of sin by the Lord Jesus Christ, is free to cease serving sin.** Any failure to follow through by yielding oneself to God, and ceasing to serve sin, is owing to unbelief, and unbelief alone. Further, that failure is to be treated as unbelief, and not as some innocent error, or lingering dominion of sin that was not addressed by “*the Deliverer*” (Rom 11:26). That would be tantamount to Peter being delivered from prison, yet retaining the chains that had confined him there.

There is to be no tolerance of any teacher or teaching that leads people to believe that the sin from which they have been freed maintains its power over them. Nor are those who have been delivered from the power of darkness to retain thoughts of helplessness, as though they were not really delivered by Jesus. Such views negate any claim to faith, misrepresent both God and Christ, and demean the salvation that is in Him with eternal glory. Further, they are the result of embracing a lie. The lie is that they are still under the dominion of something that has been forgiven. The acceptance of the lie forbids the person to reckon himself to be “*dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord*” (Rom 6:11) – **a posture that is required by the Lord.** Those who

perpetrate doctrines that produce such effects are to be soundly rebuked, and

their teaching treated with absolute and total disdain. Their error is the direct

result of ignoring the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and it is corrupting.

THERE WAS NO SMALL STIR

^{12:18} *Now as soon as it was day, there was no small stir among the soldiers, what was become of Peter.*

A lot had happened during the night – things of which these people were totally unaware. Peter had been delivered. He had been with those who were praying at Mary’s house. He had reported the great deliverance that was wrought by God through a holy angel. A commission had even been delivered to report to James and the brethren the wonderful things that had happened. I can tell you that the things taking place in Mary’s home were quite different than the environment of which we will now read.

AS SOON AS IT WAS DAY

“Now as soon as it was day . . .”

So far as Herod and his soldiers were concerned, the next significant

Sometimes that “*song*” is the result of the joyful recollection of Divine mercies and goodness in the past. It is also the result of deliverance that has been experienced during the night. If you have walked for any length of time with the Lord, you know what I am speaking about.

Now, a new day dawns, and Peter has already visited one location, and is in another, enjoying the freedom that only the Lord can create. But, alas, back at the prison, once occupied by Peter, all is not well. There is confusion among the hosts of the enemy! Those who are under the control of the wicked one are in a state of consternation.

WHAT WAS BECOME OF PETER

“ . . . there was no small stir among the soldiers, what was become of Peter.” Other versions read, “*no small disturbance,*”^{NASB} “*no small commotion,*”

This is how *the flesh* reacts to the working of the Lord. There are things with which the ungodly cannot contend – things that the devil, with all of his power, cannot reverse or modify. When any event or circumstance negates the power of the wicked one, it also voids every form of opposition and contradiction. There are no adversarial human strategies that can be successful where Satan himself has been overthrown. Therefore, when confronted with the startling absence of Peter, there was not a thing that the soldiers or Herod could do. That circumstance is the cause for “*no small stir among the soldiers.*” It was their helpless state that dictated their response.

THE MANNER OF THE KINGDOM

There have been numerous times when the Lord outwardly frustrated the enemies of the Lord.

- ⇒ The drowning of Pharaoh and his hosts (Ex 14:9-10,25,28).
- ⇒ When Gideon and his men stood around the camp of the Midianites, the Lord “*set every man’s sword against his brother*” (Judges 7:22).
- ⇒ The Lord turned the worldly-wise counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness (2 Sam 15:31).
- ⇒ The angel of the Lord slew 185,000 Sennacherib’s army during the night (2 Kgs 19:35).
- ⇒ During the days of Jehosaphat, when the Ammonite and Moabites stood up against them, God told them, “*Ye shall not need to fight in this battle: set yourselves, and stand ye still, and see the salvation of the Lord.*” The Lord then set abashments against these foes, and they helped to actually destroy one another (2 Chron 20:17-23).

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event would occur in the morning. However, a great deliverance was wrought during the night. A similar deliverance took place when Israel walked out of Egypt **during the night** (Ex 11:4; 12:29-36), and when Paul and Silas were freed **during the night** (16:25-26). In all of these case, the words of young Elihu were fulfilled: “*God . . . giveth songs in the night*” (Job 35:10). David said the Lord’s “*song*” would be with him “*in the night*” (Psa 42:8). He also spoke of his “*song in the night*” (Psa 77:5).

NIV “*were greatly troubled,*”^{BBE} “*in an uproar,*”^{GWN} “*a great dispute,*”^{MRD} “*great consternation,*”^{NET} “*no little ado,*”^{PNT} and “*very upset.*”^{IE}

The word translated “*stir*” indicates a state of mind, and not a mere physical activity. The lexical meaning of the Greek word used here is “*commotion, stir (of mind),*”^{THAYER} “*mental agitation, extreme anxiety, confusion,*”^{FRIBERG} “*serious disturbance, commotion, serious trouble,*”^{LOUW-NIDA} and “*mental agitation, consternation.*”^{GINGRICH}

⇨ Through Isaiah, the Lord said He would set the Egyptians against the Egyptians, and cause the spirit of Egypt to fail (Isa 19:2-3).

This is not to mention the time the Jewish council incarcerated Peter and John, only to find them to disappear from jail, and were now preaching again in the Temple (Acts 5:19-25).

It is still true, *“There is no wisdom nor understanding nor counsel against the LORD”* (Prov 21:30). And again, *“There are many devices in a man’s heart; nevertheless the counsel of the LORD, that shall stand”* (Prov 19:21). Those who are engaged in the good and acceptable will of the Lord can say to their foes, *“Take counsel together, and it shall come to nought; speak the word, and it shall not stand: for God is with us”*

(Isa 8:10). Is it not written, *“If God be for us, who can be against us?”* (Rom 8:31).

These things are being lived out in our text: the foe is being frustrated, and the cause of the Lord is moving forward! Of course, when men adopt an agenda of their own, or fail to work in strict harmony with God’s revealed purpose, their efforts are all in vain.

THE REACTION OF HEROD

“^{19a} And when Herod had sought for him, and found him not, he examined the keepers, and commanded that they should be put to death.”

The time now comes for Herod to carry out his intentions: to bring Peter before the people and let them do with him what they desire, just as they did with Jesus, nearly one-and-a-half decades ago.

HEROD COULD NOT FIND HIM

“And when Herod had sought for him, and found him not . . .”

The thought had not entered Herod’s mind that he was inferior to Peter, and that his will was not even a consideration within the framework of the will of God. He is familiar with the Jews, but he does not have a particle of understanding concerning the God of the Jews. He thinks that he is in charge of the situation, and that the best thing for his popularity and personal gratification is to please the Jews. In his thinking, he had carried out his intentions against James, and will also do the same with Peter. This how the flesh thinks: it sees itself as thoroughly capable of doing what it wants to do.

Now, however, Herod comes up against something with which he cannot contend. **He cannot even find Peter, much less carry out his intentions against him.** He has soldiers and a militia at his command – but he still cannot find Peter. There were no doubt some who are quite willing to work with him to find Peter, but he still could not

find him. I do not doubt that he consulted with certain Jewish leaders, like one of his predecessors did when the Christ was born (Matt 2:4).

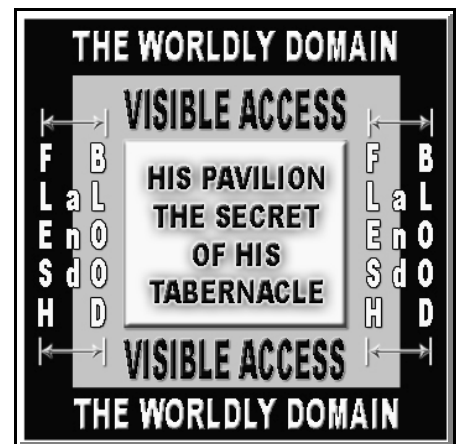
When the text says Herod *“sought for”* Peter, it reflects a certain focus and intensity. There was nothing casual or indifferent about his quest. The Greek word translated *“sought for,”* is *ἐπιζητήσας*, and it means. *“Seek diligently,”* ^{THAYER} *“as making an effort to get what one wants demand, strive for, require,”* ^{FRIBERG} and *“to try to learn the location of something by searching for it (presumably somewhat more emphatic or goal-directed than ‘to try to learn where something is,’”* ^{LOUW-NIDA}

We must learn from this the effectiveness of Divine hiding! When the Head of the church moves someone to a place of safety, there is no way that the enemies of the hidden one can find him! With all of their wisdom and resources, they cannot touch the one who is under Divine protection. It is said of whoever is born of God, *“that wicked one toucheth him not”* (1 John 5:18). **If the leader of the wicked ones cannot touch such a one, you may be sure that no one in his charge can do so!**

It is not without cause that David prayed, *“Keep me as the apple of the eye, hide me under the shadow of thy wings”* (Psa 17:8). Again, *“Hide me from the secret counsel of the wicked; from the insurrection of the workers of iniquity”* (Psa 64:2). And again, *“Deliver me, O LORD, from mine enemies: I flee unto thee to hide me”* (Psa 143:9). Having experienced this benefit, David testified concerning the means through which this

hiding is accomplished. *“For in the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion: in the secret of His tabernacle shall He hide me: He shall set me up upon a rock”* (Psa 27:5). Behold how David besought the Lord with understanding: *“Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me: for my soul trusteth in Thee: yea, in the shadow of Thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast”* (Psa 57:1).

The real safety is found in one’s identity and fellowship with the Lord. It is there, in the *“heavenly places,”* that



Satan and his foes have no access! Examples of safety being lived out, as in our text, include the following.

- ⇨ The infant Moses was hidden from the eyes and intentions of Pharaoh for three months (Ex 2:2).
- ⇨ Two spies from Israel were hid by Rahab in the city of Jericho (Josh 2:4,6).

- ⇒ Obadiah hid “an hundred prophets” from rampaging Jezebel (1 Kgs 18:4).
- ⇒ Young Josiah was hidden for six years from the wrath of Athalia, who killed the king’s sons (2 Kgs 11:2-3).

The point here is that, for those living unto the Lord, when their activity for the Lord is threatened by inimical forces, “The Lord knoweth how to deliver **the godly** out of temptations” (2 Pet 2:9).

happened. A great deliverance was wrought right under their nose, and completely without any awareness of it on their part.

This is a demonstration of how the Lord counts the wisdom of the world foolishness. He uses their own craftiness to snare them. As it is written, “For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness. And again, The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise,

Some versions read “punished,” rather than “executed,” “killed,” or “put to death.” This is based on the general definition of the Greek used here (ἀπαχθήναι): “to lead away.” However, as used here, even the linguists conclude it means “Used of a way leading to a certain end.” THAYER “put to death,” UBS and “execute.” LOUW-NIDA Herod had already examined and tried the men. They were not led away to be tried in a court, but for the sentence to be carried out – in this case, death.

The Manner of Historical Rulers

It was the manner of historical rulers to put to death those who did not carry out their duty, or were in some other way found to be unacceptable.

- ⇒ Abimelech charged all his people to “put to death” anyone who touched Isaac or his wife (Gen 26:11).
- ⇒ Nebuchadnezzar decreed anyone speaking against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednigo be cut in pieces (Dan 3:22).
- ⇒ Darius commanded that the men who accused Daniel be thrown into the lion’s den, from which Daniel had been delivered (Dan 6:24).

Behold again that “the way of the transgressor is hard.” That is, it is hedged with thorns and disadvantages.

Flesh Is Obstinate

When it comes to the flesh, it is obstinate and obtuse. It cannot learn anything from the workings of the Lord, for “the carnal mind is enmity against God” (Rom 8:7). The unspiritual, or “natural” mind does not reason with God as its locus. It rather reasons as though “There is no God” (Psa 53:1). It does not assign causes to God Almighty, but is blind to His workings, and steeled against the messages they deliver. This is the manner of the flesh. It will move those who beheld Jesus “approved of God” among them by “miracles and signs and wonders,” and imagine that they can break loose from His binding influence by killing Him (Acts 2:22-23; Psa 2:2-3).

Thus Herod cannot even think with Divine working in mind. His mind is nailed to the earth, like everyone who is alienated from the life of God.

All of God’s deliverance are this way. When the truth of them is known, they defy carnal explanation. Yet, even though the world cannot comprehend them, they are thoroughly effective, and their results cannot be denied, even though they defy explanation.

That is another one of the marvelous benefits of loving the Lord with all of the heart, soul, mind, and strength, and doing whatever we do with all of our might, as unto Him (Mk 12:30; Eccl 9:10). **Of course, for those who do not live in this manner, no such deliverance and protection is promised.** While this may not be a popular view, it is a truthful one. God has made no commitments for good to those who ignore His Son and live only for themselves.

HE EXAMINED THE KEEPERS

“... he examined the keepers. . .”

Other versions read, “cross-examined,” NIV “questioning,” BBE “interrogated,” CSB “arraigned,” MRD “asked the guards many questions,” IE “sharply questions,” MONTGOMERY and “placed the guards on trial.” AMPLIFIED

This was no casual questioning, but a strong and unrelenting interrogation. The word used here means “to investigate, examine, inquire into, scrutinize, sift, question.” THAYER The picture is of an aggressive lawyer, questioning thoroughly, probing, and seeking for a satisfactory explanation.

However, Herod will not be able to obtain a rational answer from the guards, for they had no idea what had

that they are vain” (1 Cor 3:19-20).

All of God’s deliverance are this way. When the truth of them is known, they defy carnal explanation. Yet, even though the world cannot comprehend them, they are thoroughly effective, and their results cannot be denied, even though they defy explanation.

The soldiers did not see anything or hear anything. Peter’s chains fell off, and they did not see or hear them fall. Peter walked right past them, yet they were oblivious to that fact. The large iron gate swung open, and they neither saw it nor heard it. And now, under the strenuous examination of a despot, they had to admit all of this was true. Oh, it is true indeed, “the way of the transgressor is hard.”

HE COMMANDED THAT THEY SHOULD BE PUT TO DEATH

“... and commanded that they should be put to death.” Other versions read, “Ordered that they be led away to execution,” NASB “ordered that they be executed,” NIV “commanded them to be led to be punished,” GENEVA “led away to punishment,” YLT “court-martialed and sentenced to death,” LIVING and “gave the order that the guards be killed.” IE

And what can be said of those who, in the name of Jesus, cater to the flesh, shaping their speech so as not to offend those who prefer and love the world? What can actually be gained by such an approach? **Will compromise cause the truth to be more appealing to such people?** Will the Holy Spirit, who uses the Word of God as His sword, be more inclined to use the approaches and routines of men to reach the hearts of

those who are on the broad road that leads to destruction? The answer ought to be obvious, but in today's church culture this is not well known. This is largely owing to the intrusion of false teachers.

Trust In God

When you experience difficulty in the world, or stand in need of some kind of deliverance, **consider the God who**

works in this manner. Ponder how He knows how to deliver the godly out of temptation (2 Pet 2:9). Meditate on the fact that His eyes are always *“upon the righteous, and His ears are open to their cries”* (Psa 34:15; 1 Pet 3:12). Seek for grace for yourself to be described as *“Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you”* (1 Pet 5:7). Your faith will confirm the truth of these things.

A SLICE OF HERODIAN LIFE

“^{19b} And he went down from Judaea to Caesarea, and there abode.²⁰ And Herod was highly displeased with them of Tyre and Sidon: but they came with one accord to him, and, having made Blastus the king's chamberlain their friend, desired peace; because their country was nourished by the king's country.”

The text takes a sudden shift, reporting that Herod goes to another location for a while. All of this is done in order to confirm that he had not passed from under the scrutinizing eye of the Almighty God. We will now be briefly exposed to a slice of Herodian life.

HE ABODE IN CAESAREA – WHERE PETER HAD BEEN

“And he went down from Judaea to Caesarea, and there abode.”

Down from Judaea

Remember, Caesarea was actually north of Jerusalem. However this is not a directional statement, but one of perspective. It is the manner of historical accounts to reckon Jerusalem (which was in Judaea) as the center of Divine attention. It was located in a high region, so that wherever you went from there was actually a descent: *“As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the LORD is round about his people from henceforth even for ever”* (Psa 125:2).

⇨ *“Go up to Jerusalem”* (1 Kgs 12:28; 2 Kgs 12:17; 16:5; 2 Chron 2:16; Ezra 1:3; 7:13; Matt 20:17,18; Mk 10:32,33; Lk 2:42; 18:31; 19:28; John

2:13; 5:1; 11:55; Acts 11:2; 15:2; 21:4, 12,15; 24:11; 25:9; Gal 1:17-18).

⇨ *“Down from Jerusalem”* (Mk 3:22; Lk 10:30; Acts 8:26; 25:7).

Additionally, the Lord's house, which was in Jerusalem, was on a mountain. This was reckoned as the place where blessing and spiritual renewal would take place.

⇨ *“And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to **the***

*and in chariots, and in litters, and upon mules, and upon **swift beasts, to my holy mountain Jerusalem, saith the LORD, as the children of Israel bring an offering in a clean vessel into the house of the LORD”*** (Isa 66:20).

⇨ *“O Lord, according to all thy righteousness, I beseech thee, let thine anger and thy fury be turned away from **Thy city Jerusalem, Thy holy mountain:** because for our sins,*

The text takes a sudden shift, reporting that Herod goes to another location for a while. All of this is done in order to confirm that he had not passed from under the scrutinizing eye of the Almighty God.

mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem” (Isa 2:3).

⇨ *“O Zion, that bringest good tidings, **get thee up into the high mountain;** O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God!”* (Isa 40:9).

⇨ *“And they shall bring all your brethren for an offering unto the LORD out of all nations upon horses,*

and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and Thy people are become a reproach to all that are about us” (Dan 9:16).

⇨ *“So shall ye know that I am the LORD your God dwelling in **Zion, my holy mountain:** then shall Jerusalem be holy, and there shall no strangers pass through her any more”* (Joel 3:17).

⇨ *“And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to **the mountain of the LORD,** and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall*

go forth of Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem” (Micah 4:2).

⇒ “Thus saith the LORD; I am returned unto Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and Jerusalem shall be called a city of truth; and **the mountain of the LORD of hosts the holy mountain**” (Zech 8:3).

A Point to Be Made

The geographical location and prominence of Judea and Jerusalem are a living figure of the nature of the Kingdom of God. **The things that are immediately associated with the Living God are the highest and most relevant matters.** The place of Divine fellowship is the preeminent place, and fellowship with God is the loftiest involvement. Anything and everything that have to do with other things is lesser, secondary, and subordinate.

Herod Goes down to Caesarea

At this point, and according to Scripture, we have no idea of the time frame in which Herod went down to Caesarea – precisely when he went to Caesarea, or how longed he stayed. “This journey of Herod is related by Josephus (Antiq., book 19, chapter 8, section 2). He says that it was after he had reigned over all Judea for three years.” ALBERT BARNES

You might recall that Peter had returned from this region some time earlier, after preaching and spending time with Cornelius (Acts 10:1,24; 11:11).

HIGHLY DISPLEASED WITH THEM OF TYRE AND SIDON

“²⁰And Herod was highly displeased with them of Tyre and Sidon . . .” Other versions read, “very angry,” NKJV “had been quarreling,” NIV “was in bitter hostility,” DARBY “having an angry quarrel,” NET “on bad terms,” NJB “Had incurred Herod’s violent displeasure,” WEYMOUTH “cherished a bitter grudge,” WILLIAMS “violently displeased,” MONTGOMERY and “cherished bitter animosity and hostility.” AMPLIFIED

The word from which “highly displeased” is translated is very strong. It does not describe a passing emotion, but reflects aggressive and harmful intention. This is the only place the word is used in Scripture. As used here “It means

to meditate war; to purpose war in the mind.” ALBERT BARNES As used by the Greeks, it meant “to carry on war with great animosity . . . to be very angry, be exasperated,” THAYER “to be extremely angry, with the implication of violence,” LOUW-NIDA and “to fight desperately.” LIDDELL-SCOTT

The cause for Herod’s displeasure with Tyre and Sidon is not known, either from Scripture or from history. We do know that these cities were under Roman rule, but had been permitted some measure of liberty. There is no proof that they had been insubordinate to Rome. Some have conjectured the controversy was over the matter of commerce – perhaps having to do with taxation. However, all of this is nothing more than conjecture. In some way they had agitated this proud king, incurring his indignation. It appears as though he went to the region to settle their differences by diplomatic means rather than subduing them by war.

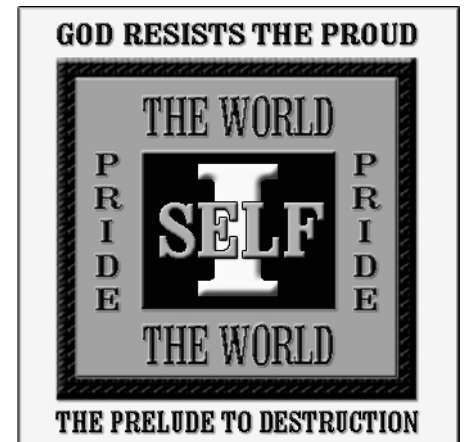
Why Do We Have This Record?

To some, this record appears to be a meaningless bit of trivia thrown in by Luke. However, I cannot believe this is the case. Such a procedure is by no means the manner of those who are writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

It seems to me that we are being further acquainted with the nature of Herod – a man driven by pride, and a quest for popularity. In him we will see the Scripture fulfilled: “Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall” (Prov 16:18). This text is often quoted as saying pride goes “before a fall.” However, this is not correct. It goes “before destruction.” **That is, God will not overlook the surfacing of this trait.** Solomon said that of the seven things the Lord hated, “a proud look” was number one (Prov 6:16).

Jesus declared that pride issues forth “out of the heart of man,” and brings defilement with it (Mk 7:21-23). Paul reminded Timothy that pride causes self-exaltation which, in turn, leads to falling into “the condemnation of the devil” (1 Tim 3:5). This is one of the three things that are “in the world,” all of which are evidences of a love for the world. John tells us of the one possessing such things, “the love of the Father is **not**

in him” (1 John 2:15-17).



Both Peter and James declare that God “resisteth the proud,” contrasting them with “the humble,” to whom He gives grace (1 Pet 5:5; James 4:6). In Mary’s prayer of magnification, she stated that God “hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts” (Lk 1:51). That is, He has not allowed their corrupt causes to be brought to fulfillment.

As confirmed in “Herod the king,” pride moves a person to have an inordinate view of himself. In such a case, “I” is at the center of one’s life, and God Himself is moved, at the very best, to the periphery of life. By its very nature, **pride has to do with this world, and one’s status in it.** It is an evidence of being attached to the world, for it is one third of “**all that is in the world**” (1 John 2:15).

Because God “knoweth the proud afar off” (Psa 138:6), they are fundamentally ignorant of God and His ways. **This is compared with the Lord’s inclination toward the lowly, or those who have forfeited personal interests in favor of knowing God.** The Spirit is very definitive on this matter, particularly when dealing with teachers who do not consent to sound doctrine, choosing to perpetrate spiritual confusion and error. Here is what He says of such spiritual rogues. “**If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife,**

railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself" (1 Tim 6:3-5). **It is the pride of such an individual that has hid the truth from him.**

I say these things, because those who have a compelling love for the truth, and a corresponding disdain for doctrinal error are often charged with being haughty. **However, it is the religious leader who is oblivious of truth and addicted to error that is the haughty one.**

I say these things, because those who have a compelling love for the truth, and a corresponding disdain for doctrinal error are often charged with being haughty. However, it is the religious leader who is oblivious of truth and addicted to error that is the haughty one. His failure to apprehend the truth is confirmation of that condition.

His failure to apprehend the truth is confirmation of that condition. If he were humble, God would draw nigh to him and open the truth to his heart. Pride raises an impenetrable wall between men and God, so that the truth can neither be seen nor known.

The Case of Herod

The case of Herod will confirm to our hearts the aggressiveness with which the Lord treats the proud. He was not a Jew, nor was he a religious leader. Yet, he provides us with an example of the Lord's posture against the proud. His role as king confirmed that he was directly responsible to God, for "there is no power but of God" (Rom 13:1). Let us behold the account of Herod with godly discretion, for in it we are being exposed to Divine manners.

THEY DESIRED PEACE

"... but they came with one accord to him, and, having made Blastus the king's chamberlain their friend, desired peace..." Other versions refer to Blastus as "the king's personal aide,"

^{NKJV} "a trusted personal servant," ^{NIV} "The controller of the king's house," ^{BBE} "the king's chief personal servant," ^{CJB} "in charge of the king's bedroom," ^{CSB} "the king's personal assistant," ^{NET} "over the bed-chambers of the king," ^{YLT} "the royal secretary," ^{LIVING} and "his treasurer." WEYMOUTH

Representatives from Tyre and Sidon came in a state of unity and accord, seeking to negotiate peace with Herod. They knew that an angry Herod would work to their decided disadvantage. Further, they did not

approach him directly, but sought to gain access to him through their personal friend, Blastus, who, in his regular duties, was close to Herod. **Behold how wise they were in their approach, driven a desire for peace.**

Exactly what is a "chamberlain?"

Judging from the various versions of Scripture, quite an array of possibilities are open to us: personal aide, personal servant, controller, in charge of the king's bedroom, personal assistant, and royal secretary, and treasurer. The Greek word from which this word is translated is **κοιτωνος**. This word does mean "the officer who is over the bed-chamber, the chamberlain." ^{THAYER} The word is used elsewhere of one with decidedly more control – such as Erasmus, a saint who was "the chamberlain of the city" of Rome (Rom 16:28). The point here seems to be that Blastus was in charge of the personal affairs of king Herod, which would have included his bedchamber. **Apparently the people came to him because he had the ear of Herod without being in the area of competition or kingly duties.** It was

certainly a shrewd action on the part of the people. Sensing the gravity of their situation, they ignored protocol, and sought a more direct access to the king, in order to present their cause.

THEY WERE NOURISHED BY THE KING'S COUNTRY

"... because their country was nourished by the king's country." Other versions read, "supplied with food from the king's country," ^{NKJV} "fed by the king's country," ^{NASB} "depended on the king's country for their food," ^{NRSV} "depended on the king's lands for their food supply," ^{CJB} "the supplies of their country were derived from the kingdom of Herod," ^{MRD} "their cities were economically dependent upon trade with Herod's country," ^{LIVING} and "They were forced to do this because their country's food supply was dependent on the king's dominions." PHILLIPS

The reason for their quest for peace is now stated more precisely. They were not seeking peace for themselves alone, but for their country. Furthermore, they were not simply trying to avoid a military skirmish with Herod, although, if his anger continued, such a confrontation would no doubt have occurred. The reason for their mission of peace was that their country depended on Herod's domain for food. The government of Rome, being universal in extent, oversaw the distribution of food and other necessities. No province could function in a strictly independent manner.

The "King's Country"

The kingdom of Herod was Palestine, the land of the Jews, and it was rich with supplies. This is the very land described as "the sanctuary" (Ex 15:17), "the land of Israel" (1 Sam 13:19), "the land of the Hebrews" (Gen 40:15), "the land of the Jews" (Acts 10:39), "the holy land" (Zech 2:12), "the Lord's land" (Hos 9:3), and the land belonging to "Immanuel" (Isa 8:8). God referred to it as "My land" (2 Chron 7:20; Isa 14:25; Jer 2:7; Ezek 36:5; Joel 1:6), and the prophets referred to it as "**His land**" (Deut 32:43; Psa 10:10; Ezek 36:20; Joel 2:18; Zech 9:16). But now, Tyre and Sidon refer to the same real estate as "the king's land" – and the king to which they referred was Herod! **Oh, what a penalty there is for**

defection from the Lord!

When described through Moses, the Lord said this land was *“a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills; a land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig trees, and pomegranates; a land where thou shalt eat bread without scarceness, thou shalt not lack any thing in it: a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass”* (Deut 8:7-9). Moses further said of the land, *“But the land, whither ye go to possess it, is a land of hills and valleys, and drinketh water of the rain of heaven: a land which the LORD thy God careth for: the eyes of the LORD thy God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year”* (Deut 11:11-12).

But now, alas, this rich and fertile land was being governed by Herod, not the Jews. The governing kingdom was Rome, not the Israelites. **The rich resources that were intended for Israel were now out from under their control, and were being distributed at the whim of a political despot.** He was managing what God had given to His people, and was doing so because the land had been filled with moral and spiritual darkness (Matt 4:16). The people who were living in it had killed the prince of life, martyred Stephen, and vigorously opposed the spreading of the Gospel.

Tyre and Sidon stood in sharp contrast with *“the land of the Jews.”* They were seaports, and were thus cities of commerce. However, located in a rocky area, they could not produce food. **Their did business with the goods of others, but actually produced nothing of substance themselves.**

Now, when Tyre and Sidon need food, they do not come to an Israelite king, as they did in the time of Solomon. During Solomon’s reign he struck a trade agreement with the area from which these messengers of peace were sent, exchanging wheat from Israel for choice timber from Sidon (1 Kgs 5:7-14). Ezekiel referred to these trade agreements, made by Judah with surrounding lands (Ezek 27:16-17).

A Spiritual Parallel

These two cities have a remarkable resemblance to spiritual Babylon. In a description of this monstrosity, John is shown the allegiance that it has to the world. **She is seen as an entity with no resources herself.** She only did business with what was supplied by the merchants of the world. It was revealed to John that when Babylon falls, it will cause great lament among the world’s merchants, because she is like a great seaport through which the world peddles its goods. **Having rejected the Lord’s Christ, and disdained His great salvation, this whorish city is a trading point for the things of this world.**

In picturesque language, the world is depicted as mourning her demise within but an hour of time. How grievously they cry out. *“And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her: for no man buyeth their merchandise any more: The merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and of pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet, and all thyine wood, and all manner vessels of ivory, and all manner vessels of most precious wood, and of brass, and iron, and marble, and cinnamon, and odours, and ointments, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and beasts, and sheep, and horses, and chariots, and slaves, and souls of men. And the fruits that thy soul lusted after are departed from thee, and all things which were dainty and goodly are departed from thee, and thou shalt find them no more at all”* (Rev 18:11-14).

Thus the worldly church is seen as being in league with the world, like Tyre and Sidon was with Herod and Rome. **If you were to remove from the Christian world all worldly professionalism and business pursuits, the impact would be staggering.** It would have a direct bearing upon education, entertainment, real estate, engineering, architecture, financial institutions, clothing distributors, electronic media, the music world, book publishers and distributors, dietary businesses, jewelry stores, the counseling world, and a host of other things. **There are also a significant number of worldly organizations that market in “the souls of men,” capitalizing on the constituency**

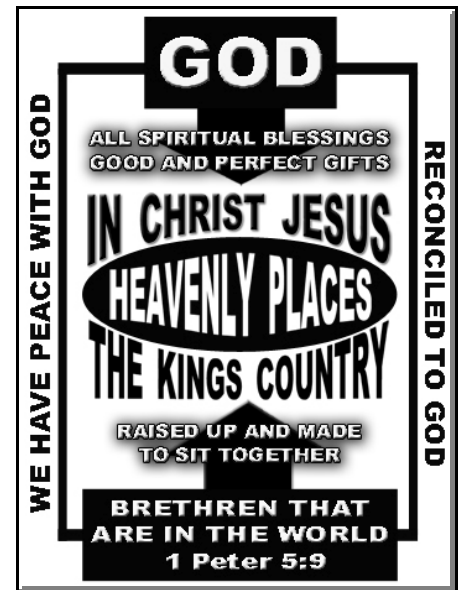
of the Christian world.

All of these circumstances belie any claim to identity with God through Christ Jesus. All of them are a source of shame and an evidence of unbelief.

A MARVELOUS TYPE OF THE LOGIC OF PEACE WITH GOD

In this text we have a remarkable parallel to certain spiritual realities. First, in Christ Jesus we are in a situation similar to that of Tyre and Sidon. Our lives are also being *“nourished by the King’s country.”* Instead of being supplied by a worldly king, these supplies are administered by the Lord Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit. God has deposited *“all spiritual blessings”* in *“heavenly places,”* which parallel *“the Lord’s land,”* and they are accessed through Jesus Christ (Eph 1:3).

All of the *“treasures of wisdom*



and knowledge are hid in Him” (Col 2:3). Furthermore, *“all things that pertain to life and godliness”* are provided to us *“through the knowledge of Him”* who has *“called us”* – and that circumstance requires peace between those receiving the supplies, and the One distributing them (2 Pet 1:3). Grace, mercy, and peace – so essential for the maintenance of the life that is in Christ Jesus, come *“from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord”* (1 Tim 1:2; 2 Tim 1:2; Tit 1:4; 2

John 1:3). "Love with faith" come "from God" (Eph 6:23). "Every good gift and perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from God" (James 1:17). Truly, in every sense of the word, the people of God are "nourished by the King's country."

It is precisely for this reason that there must be "peace with God." This peace, however requires an Intermediary – Jesus Christ, who was, in a sense, prefigured in Blastus. What is more, just

believed not" (Jude 1:5). Those in Christ are also reminded that there were those who came out of Egypt, received the promise of their own land, yet "could not enter in because of unbelief." Then saints are admonished, "Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it" (Heb 3:19-4:1).

The Modern Day Dilemma

There is a certain dilemma that

This insidiously suggests that a person can be at peace with God, yet conduct their lives at a distance from the Lord. It suggests that the issue is really not alienation from God, or incurring the displeasure of the Lord, but just correcting a few unpleasant habits.

as in the case of Tyre and Sidon, the peace must be maintained. **Our spiritual citizenry must be maintained within the boundaries of Divine acceptance.** This involves abiding in Christ (John 15:7), continuing in His Word (John 8:31), and what we have heard remaining in us (1 John 2:24). It requires walking as dear children (Eph 5:1), seeking the things that are above (Col 3:1-2), and working out our own salvation with fear and trembling (Phil 2:12).

There is also the matter of **not** provoking the Lord (1 Cor 10:22), giving **no** place to the devil (Eph 4:27), and **not** allowing the entrance of "an evil heart of unbelief" (Heb 3:12).

Many professing believers are conducting their lives just like those of Tyre and Sodom – they are provoking and displeasing the Lord who purchased them, and from whom all of their nourishment is obtained. Jesus can be "displeased" with His disciples (Mk 10:14). The church is solemnly reminded that God Almighty is said to have been "not pleased" with "many" of the very ones He delivered and maintained. Consequently, they were "overthrown" en route to the promised land (1 Cor 10:5). Believers are also reminded that God, "having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that

exists in the modern church. Countless numbers of people have fallen into a state that is even worse than that of Tyre and Sidon. They **did** know the source of their supplies and the need for peace between them and the king of that supplying country. However, this morsel of knowledge has been taken from the people by a host of professing teachers. Their attention has been turned to their "habits," as though they were not personally responsible for their condition. They are being provided with recovery programs, and methodologies designed to help them get a handle on their lives again. It all sounds innocent, and even proper – at least to the naive and uninformed. They are taught to say they are followers of Jesus, and that they are saved – however, their lives are out of control. **This insidiously suggests that a person can be at peace with God, yet conduct their lives at a distance from the Lord.** It suggests that the issue is really not alienation from God, or incurring the displeasure of the Lord, but just correcting a few unpleasant habits.

As a result of this delusion, the people engage in a quest that is wholly centered in this world. A satisfying and productive life in this world captures the attention, and the world to come is conveniently forgotten. Death, the coming of the Lord, the passing of the

heavens and the earth, and the day of judgment are placed on the shelf of neglect, and it is imagined that everything will be all right if life here and now can be supposedly *controlled*.

In order to sanctify this approach, God is acknowledge as having the power to help the people change their lives. However, the corruption of the heart is not acknowledged, nor is unbelief admitted. **The whole approach fails to acknowledge that a person cannot walk in the light and stumble** (John 11:9). It will not admit that one cannot walk in the Spirit and fulfill the lusts of the flesh (Gal 5:16). It ignores the fact that if the provided graces are added in their faith, they will "never fall" (2 Pet 1:10).

A "faithful" God has "called" us "into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord" (1 Cor 1:9). That fellowship is remarkably expansive, including "fellowship with the Father" (1 John 1:3), and the "fellowship of the Spirit" (Phil 2:1). **Any postulate that suggests that a fellowship of that magnitude in any way allows for sin, betrays an ignorance of God, a lack of acquaintance with Jesus, and no familiarity with the Holy Spirit of God.**

When the King of glory has a matter against a person, reconciliation is the principle thing to be addressed. That is precisely why Paul fairly shouted out to the wayward Corinthians, "Be ye reconciled to God" (2 Cor 5:20). This is also involved in going on to perfection, refusing to remain in an spiritually infantile state (Heb 6:1-6).

Is This Being Too Critical?

Is this approach really too critical, as some have alleged? Well, one might ask the citizens of Tyre and Sidon how critical it was to seek peace between themselves and Herod, who was "highly displeased with them."

God has gone to a great extent to save us. Our salvation involved the slaughter of innocent babies as well as the birth of a Savior, "which is Christ the Lord" (Matt 2:16; Lk 2:11). It required making Jesus "to be sin for us," as well as being with Him during His earthly ministry (2 Cor 5:21; Acts 10:38). It necessitated the cursing of Jesus, as well

as Him being “approved . . . by miracles and wonders and signs” (Gal 3:13; Acts 2:22). It was imperative that God “deliver” Jesus up to death “for us all,” “for our offenses,” as well as raising Him up for our justification (Rom 4:25; 8:32).

Is there really any person of sound mind who imagines that such a God is ever indifferent to sin? Is it possible that He can never be displeased with sin in you, when He was so displeased when that sin was laid upon Christ – which caused Him to turn His face from His own Son? Is that really possible? And, what should we say of those who so represent the God of heaven, whether by outright statement, or by insinuation? Shall we ignore the influence they exert, and the confusion they cause within the body of Christ? Who is willing to step forward and defend such misrepresentations of God? – particularly since He has revealed so

I acknowledge that the matter of peace with God does not appear to be a weighty subject in our time. In preference for a self-centered life, it is something that has nearly been removed from human thinking.

much about Himself, and provided such staggering details concerning the great salvation that is realized in His Son.

It is a shame and a disgrace when, as Jesus put it, “*the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light*” (Luke 16:8). **What will be said on the day of judgment to those who were less zealous to obtain and maintain peace with God, than those of Tyre and Sidon were to be at peace with wicked Herod?**

I acknowledge that the matter of peace with God does not appear to be a weighty subject in our time. In preference for a self-centered life, it is something that has nearly been removed from human thinking. However, it is everything in the matter of salvation. Further, it is not something to be taken for granted. After all, the God who saves is also the One who keeps (Jude 1:24-25). The One who lifted us up is also the One who causes us to stand. The One who rescued us also leads us.

IT IS THE VOICE OF A GOD, AND NOT OF A MAN

“²¹ And upon a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne, and made an oration unto them. ²² And the people gave a shout, saying, It is the voice of a god, and not of a man.”

The scene now shifts, but refers to the time during which Herod was in Caesarea. The fact that this occurred in Caesarea accounts for the brief record of the citizens of that area engaging in an initiative to gain peaceful associations with Herod. The Jewish historian Josephus provides some details of this account, which are given in the box titled “**JOSEPHUS’ ACCOUNT OF HEROD.**”

In this account, we must see that God is dealing with the proud. **It also confirms that God holds all people responsible for what they do – whether that have a formal association with Him or not.** Some have conjectured that if men are not in covenant with God, the laws of God do not apply to them. I was personally subjected to this teaching during my formal religious education. However, there is no truth to it – not so much as a particle. There have been

numerous people, cities, and even nations, who were judged by God, even though they had no covenant with Him.

- ⇨ The world of Noah’s day (Gen 6:3-7).
- ⇨ The people in the plain of Shinar, who conspired to build a city and a tower (Gen 11:1-8).
- ⇨ Sodom, Gomorrah, and the cities of the plain (Gen 18:20-21,24-25).
- ⇨ Abimelech, a Philistine king (Gen 20:3).
- ⇨ The city of Nineveh (Jonah 1:2).
- ⇨ Nebuchadnezzar (Dan 4:30-33).
- ⇨ Belshazzar (Dan 5:22-30).
- ⇨ Babylon (Jer 25:12).
- ⇨ Tyre and Sidon (Isa 12:1-2).
- ⇨ The nations who possessed Canan before Israel (Deut 9:4-5).

- ⇨ The entire world (Isa 13:11).
- ⇨ The inhabitants of the earth (Isa 26:21).

Those who imagine that civil authorities are not directly responsible to God do well to take note of this text. Also, it is a sign of unspeakable rebellion and ignorance when any nation opposes the laws of God, or imagines that they are separate from the state. There are too many records in Scripture that contradict that notion, to justify it ever being spoken or entertained. God is depicted as being “*terrible to the kings of the earth*” (Psa 76:12). The idea is that He is to be feared. Such a thought would be pointless if they were not responsible to Him. With great solemnity, “*the kings of the earth,*” together with “*all people; princes, and all judges of the earth: both young men, and maidens; old men, and children,*” are admonished to “*praise the Lord from the earth*” (Psa 148:7-12). No person is exempted from this responsibility.

We will now read the account of a king who refused to do this, and of the

response of heaven to his conduct.

WHEN HEROD WAS ARRAYED IN ROYAL APPAREL

“And upon a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne . . .”

Other versions read, *“took his seat upon the rostrum,”* NASB *“on the platform,”* RSV *“in his place,”* BBE *“on the elevated seat of honor,”* DARBY *“in the judgment seat,”* DOUAY *“on a tribunal,”* MRD *“the royal seat,”* ISV and *“on the public throne.”* PHILLIPS

The idea here is not that this was Herod’s official and kingly throne. Rather, this was a place reserved for

HE MADE AN ORATION TO THEM

“ . . . and made an oration unto them . . .” Other versions read, *“gave an oration to them,”* NKJV *“delivering an address to them,”* NASB *“delivered a public address to the people,”* NIV *“made a public statement to them,”* BBE *“made a speech to them,”* CJB *“addressed them publicly,”* NAB *“and was haranguing them,”* WEYMOUTH *“made them a popular address,”* WILLIAMS and *“began to harangue them.”* MONTGOMERY

Some versions use the word *“harangue.”* This English word has the meaning *“Address forcefully.”* The first meaning of the English word is, *“a speech addressed to a public assembly.”* The second meaning is *“a ranting speech of writing.”* MERRIAM-

the conclusion of Herod’s oration. I am not sure this is what took place. First, the word used here is in the imperfect active voice, which means it was repetitive shouting: i.e. *“kept on shouting.”* It is as though this was taking place as Herod was speaking, constituting an opportunity for him to stop them from speaking as they did. The text does not confirm whether Herod worked the people into a frenzy by his oratory, or if this was the people heaping praise upon him in order to obtain his favor. It was probably a mixture of both.

IT IS THE VOICE OF A GOD

“ . . . saying, It is the voice of a god, and not of a man.” Other versions read, *“A god’s voice and not a man,”* DARBY *“The voice of God, and not of man,”* GENEVA *“These are the utterances of a God, and not of a mortal,”* MRD *“It is a god speaking, not a man!”* NJB and *“This is a god speaking, not a mere man!”* PHILLIPS

Some have conjectured that this was nothing more than an appeal the pride of Herod. However, the outcome of the whole event does not lend itself to such a conclusion. Others have suggested this was an example of emperor worship, which was common in Rome. Herod, however, was not an emperor, but was himself a subject of the emperor. It seems more likely to me that the people, inordinately impressed by the oratory of Herod, thought that a god was speaking through him – or that one had come down to them in the form of Herod. A similar conclusion was made concerning Paul and Barnabas when they preached in Lystra. Witnessing the healing of a man who had been crippled from his mother’s womb, the people cried out, *“The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men!”* They called Barnabas Jupiter, otherwise known to the Greeks as Zeus NKJV, and Paul Mercurius, known to the Greeks as Hermes, NKJV who was the messenger of Zeus, and duly represented, they thought, by Paul, *“because he was the chief speaker”* (Acts 14:11-12). Paul and Barnabas immediately tore their clothes and ran through the people rejecting such honor, for they were *“men of like passions”* as those who were setting out to worship them. Even with their zealous effort, *“they could scarcely restrain the multitudes from sacrificing to them”*

The subject of this oration is not provided – either by Luke or Josephus the historian. Although it was obviously a moving oration, it was driven by ignoble motives, and therefore will therefore immediately gain the attention of heaven.

dignitaries that came to Caesarea. It could also have been a portable apparatus appropriate for the occasion. At any rate, it solemnized the affair during which Herod would speak in the capacity of a king. The word from which *“throne”* is translated suggests an elevated area from which all of the people could be seen and addressed – like a stage.

We have such a custom in our country as well. When the president speaks in an official capacity, he is provided with a special platform and speaking stand. The official presidential seal is also displayed to confirm that he is speaking in an official capacity, and not merely providing some personal opinions of this or that.

Herod is, therefore, going to speak as the king – the one responsible for suppling this area with their needs. It is probably true, as some have surmised, that this occasion was largely owing to the quest of those from Tyre and Sidon, who were seeking peace with Herod.

WEBSTER The meaning of the Greek word used here is, *“to harangue the people; to address a public assembly, make a speech to the people,”* THAYER and *“to speak in a somewhat formal setting and probably implying a more formal use of language - ‘to address, to make a speech.’”* LOUW-NIDA

The subject of this oration is not provided – either by Luke or Josephus the historian. **Although it was obviously a moving oration, it was driven by ignoble motives, and therefore will therefore immediately gain the attention of heaven.**

THE PEOPLE GAVE HIM UNDUE VENERATION

“ . . . And the people gave a shout . . .” Other versions read, *“the people kept shouting,”* NKJV *“kept crying out,”* NASB *“with loud cries,”* BBE *“made acclamation,”* DOUAY *“started shouting,”* GWN *“acclaimed him,”* NJB and *“At its conclusion the people gave him a great ovation.”* LIVING

The Living Bible presents the shouting of the people as taking place at

(14:14-18).

This, in my judgment, is what is being reported in the text. The people felt that they were being addressed by one of the gods. Considering what follows, I do not see how this text can be considered in any other way.

A Principle to Be Seen

This is not the first or last time that a word has been delivered to the sons of men that was not from God, yet was regarded as coming from Him. It is one thing for something like this to occur in a political arena, or among heathen peoples. It is quite another for it to be found among those who profess to know God, or be followers of Christ.

Under the Law, God warned the people about prophets who “*presumed to speak a word*” in his name. Of such a person He said, “*that prophet shall die*” (Deut 18:20). Jeremiah spoke of such prophets in these words: “*Then the LORD said unto me, The prophets prophesy lies in my name: I sent them not, neither have I commanded them, neither spake unto them: they prophesy unto you a false vision and divination, and a thing of nought, and the deceit of their heart. Therefore thus saith the LORD concerning the prophets that prophesy in my name, and I sent them not, yet they say, Sword and famine shall not be in this land: By sword and famine shall those prophets be consumed*” (Jer 14:14-15).

In a telling word concerning the seriousness of misrepresenting the Lord, He spoke again through Jeremiah. “*Behold, I am against them that prophesy false dreams, saith the LORD, and do tell them, and cause my people to err by their lies, and by their lightness: yet I sent them not, nor commanded them: therefore they shall not profit this people at all, saith the LORD. And when this people, or the prophet, or a priest, shall ask thee, saying, What is the burden of the LORD? thou shalt then say unto them, What burden? I will even forsake you, saith the LORD. And as for the prophet, and the priest, and the people, that shall say, The burden of the LORD, I will even punish that man and his house*” (Jer 23:32-34).

Notice the pointedness of the Lord’s denunciation of false prophets.

- ⇨ They prophesied false dreams – dreams that did not have their origin in God.
- ⇨ They caused the people to err by their lies.
- ⇨ They caused the people to err by their “*lightness,*” or “*reckless boasting.*”^{NASB}
- ⇨ They misrepresented “*the burden of the Lord,*” or the preeminent message that was to be spoken at that time.

In our time, there are all manner of supposed Divine priorities being placed before the people. Some are saying that this is the time for the nation to repent. Others are saying this is the time for men to take charge of their households. Still others are saying this is the time God is going to pour out His Spirit on all flesh. There are some who say this is the time for the churches to unite, and stand together. Still others say God is calling for a godly man to be our president, while others are urging a lukewarm and carnal church to go into all the world and preach the Gospel.

or thrust of what is to be said. If you wonder how serious God is about this, He said through Jeremiah, “*But since ye say, The burden of the LORD; therefore thus saith the LORD; Because ye say this word, The burden of the LORD, and I have sent unto you, saying, Ye shall not say, The burden of the LORD; Therefore, behold, I, even I, will utterly forget you, and I will forsake you, and the city that I gave you and your fathers, and cast you out of My presence: and I will bring an everlasting reproach upon you, and a perpetual shame, which shall not be forgotten*” (Jer 23:38-40).

All of this provides a kind of explanation for the presence of this record of Herod’s speech. **When, in the minds of the people, an individual is linked in any way with Deity, we have a serious circumstance on our hands.** If the person is properly representing God, His Word, and His priorities, all is well. However, if that is not the case, judgment is just around the corner.

Being Unable to Distinguish God’s Word

It is important for people to comprehend when a word is from God and when it is not. This is especially critical in our day, when all kinds of media are placing religious ideas before the people. There are men who are

This involves more than testing whether men are speaking according to the Word of God – although that is imperative. It also involves identifying “the burden of the Lord,” or the word that God wants delivered at this time – i.e. the emphasis or thrust of what is to be said.

It is the business of those who are in Christ to “*try the spirits, whether they are of God, because many false prophets are gone out into the world*” (1 John 4:1). This involves more than testing whether men are speaking according to the Word of God – although that is imperative. It also involves identifying “*the burden of the Lord,*” or the word that God wants delivered at this time – i.e. the emphasis

promoting programs within the church of God that are, to say the least, unsubstantiated. Some of them purport to bring people closer to God, promote growth in Christ, and provide a way to gain the dominance over sin. **Such claims are most serious, because those are matters in which Deity is revealed to be**

There is something that is common in all of such messages and programs. Christ is not the prominent person in them. Rather the people themselves are the centerpiece, and their welfare is the main thing. But in the Divine economy, the Son of God is the fundamental Person, and the glory of God is the primary objective.

active. Some, reacting much like those who heard the oratory of Herod, are saying: "This is a word from God." Or, "This is God's answer to my problem!"

There is something that is common in all of such messages and programs. **Christ is not the prominent person in them. Rather the people themselves are the centerpiece, and their welfare is the main thing.** But in the Divine economy, the Son of God is the fundamental Person, and the glory of God is the primary objective.

Another common thread in these programs is the minuscule role that is given to faith – the means by which justification and triumph are realized (Rom 5 :1; 1 John 5:4-5). Add to that the near-total absence of *"the knowledge of God,"* through which we are provided with everything having to do with life and godliness (2 Pet 1:3), and by which we escape the pollution of the world (2 Pet 2:20). Messages and programs that lack these things cannot possibly be from

God, and it is certain they cannot accomplish what He requires.

Crediting to God What Came from Man

How serious is it when something that originated with men is credited to God? What of those who speak of spiritual advantages and benefits that have the well of human nature as their source? **How does heaven react to such circumstances? How serious is the Lord about glory being given to Him, and to Him alone?** And, does it really make any difference to Him if men give Him glory for something that He did not do or say? Does God allow opinions in these things?

Our text will provide some insight into the matter. It will confirm that *"The eyes of the LORD are in every place, beholding the evil and the good"* (Prov 15:3), and that *"the righteous God trieth the hearts and reins"* (Psa 7:9). No person can afford to ignore this circumstance.

HEAVEN RESPONDS IMMEDIATELY

²³ And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost."

So far as the record is concerned, Herod has made no claim to being the oracle of God. While he was arrayed in gorgeous garments, he had made no claim to himself being God, or any form of Deity. The people, however, have repeatedly shouted, *"It is the voice of a god, and not of a man!"* The verb tense of the word translated *"gave a shout"* means they *"kept shouting,"*^{NKJV} or *"kept crying out."*^{NASB} **Whether during his oration or after it, there was ample time allotted to Herod to refuse to be seen in this manner.** However, being filled with pride, he received the accolades of the people. He chose not to respond like Paul and Barnabas did later, refusing to be recognized in such a manner.

IMMEDIATELY

"And immediately . . ." Other versions read, *"straight away,"*^{BBE} *"At*

once,"^{NAB} *"at that moment,"*^{NJB} *"Instantly,"*^{NLT} and *"presently."*^{NLT}

The word *"immediately"* is translated from the Greek word *παραχρημα*, which has the following lexical meaning: *"immediately, forthwith, instantly,"*^{THAYER} *"immediately, at once, without delay,"*^{FRIBERG} *"suddenly, at once, immediately' (in a number of contexts there is the implication of unexpectedness),"*^{LOUW-NIDA} and *"on the spot, forthwith, straightway."*^{LIDDELL-SCOTT}

Some of the places where this word is used are listed below. I have highlighted the word translated from this particular Greek word.

⇨ **THE CURSING OF THE FIG TREE.** *"And when he saw a fig tree in the way, he came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves only, and said unto it, Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever. And **presently** the fig tree withered away"* (Matt 21:19).

⇨ **ZECHARIAS' SPEECH RESTORED.** *"And his mouth was opened **immediately**, and his tongue loosed, and he spake, and praised God"* (Luke 1:64).

⇨ **HEALING OF PETER'S MOTHER-IN-LAW.** *"And he stood over her, and rebuked the fever: and it left her: and **immediately** she arose and ministered unto them"* (Luke 4:39).

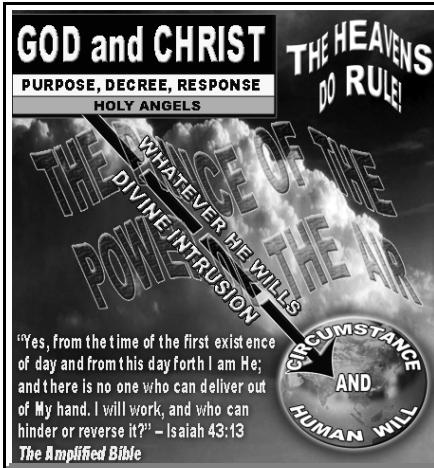
⇨ *" . . . I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy couch, and go into thine house. And **immediately** he rose up before them, and took up that whereon he lay, and departed to his own house, glorifying God"* (Luke 5:24-25).

⇨ *"And a woman having an issue of blood twelve years, which had spent all her living upon physicians, neither could be healed of any, Came behind Him, and touched the border of His garment: and **immediately** her issue of blood stanch'd"* (Luke 8:43-44).

- ⇨ “And he put them all out, and took her by the hand, and called, saying, Maid, arise. And her spirit came again, and she arose **straightway**: and he commanded to give her meat” (Luke 8:55).
- ⇨ “And He laid His hands on her: and **immediately** she was made straight, and glorified God” (Luke 13:13).
- ⇨ “And Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest. And **immediately**, while he yet spake, the cock crew” (Luke 22:60).
- ⇨ “And he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up: and **immediately** his feet and ankle bones received strength” (Acts 3:7).
- ⇨ “Then fell she down **straightway** at his feet, and yielded up the ghost: and the young men came in, and found her dead, and, carrying her forth, buried her by her husband” (Acts 5:10).
- ⇨ “And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight **forthwith**, and arose, and was baptized” (Acts 9:18).
- ⇨ “And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And **immediately** there fell on him a mist and a darkness: and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand” (Acts 13:11).
- ⇨ “And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and **immediately** all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed” (Acts 16:26).

There are seventeen places where this word is used in the New Covenant Scriptures (Matt 21:19; Lk 1:64; 4:39; 5:25; 8:44,47,55; 13:13; 18:43; 19:11; 22:60; Acts 3:7; 5:10; 9:18; 12:23; 13:11; 16:26). **In each of them, the occurrence described was initiated from heaven.** Sometimes it was a blessing, and sometimes it was a judgment. However, **it was caused by God, and took place upon earth without any form of effective opposition.**

Keep in mind that Divine determinations are made in heaven, then executed on earth. Heavenly messengers pass through the domain of the “prince of the power of the air” en route to earth – and they now encounter no detaining power. **Further, when that will is fulfilled on earth, there are times when it is completely independent of earthly**



circumstance and the human will – as in this text.

The absolute superiority of angels over men is confirmed in this passage. The angel of the Lord will act immediately, and in strict keeping with both the nature and will of the Lord. He is executing what the Lord has determined, and is not functioning on his own. Further, his action will provide confirmation of the manner in which God views men heaping praise upon men, and those upon whom the praise is heaped receiving it. It is imperative that we take due note of these things, for God is still beholding the sons of men and what they do. He is still beholding and trying “*the children of men*” (Psa 11:4).

THE ANGEL OF THE LORD RESPONDS

“... the angel of the Lord smote him . . .” Other versions read, “*struck him*,” NKJV “*sent a disease on him*,” BBE “*struck him down*,” CJB “*killed*,” GWN “*struck Herod with a sickness*,” NLT “*caused him to become sick*,” IE and “*smote him and cut him down*.” AMPLIFIED

The root meaning of the word translated “smote” is “to beat.” As used

here, the word means “to afflict; to visit with evils, etc.: as with a deadly disease,” THAYER “to strike down,” FRIBERG “to strike a heavy blow, implying severe damage,” LOUW-NIDA “a deadly blow,” LIDDELL-SCOTT and “strike down, slay.” GINGRICH

This is a most sobering text to consider! It provides insight into the Person of God that is not often expounded. **Some are even foolish enough to affirm that no disease or calamity actually comes from God – but here is a case where it did!** The blow delivered by the angel was a mortal one, resulting in the death of Herod. There was no battle, simply the execution of the will of God without any kind of hindrance or delay.

This is not the first person whom God slew because of their sin. Let me name a few of them to remind us that it truly is “*a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God*” (Heb 10:31).

- ⇨ All men, with the exception of in Noah and his family (Gen 7:21).
- ⇨ The citizens of Sodom, Gomorrah, and the cities of the plain (Gen 19:24-25).
- ⇨ The Lord slew Er, Judah’s firstborn son, because he was “*wicked in the sight of the Lord*” (Gen 38:7).
- ⇨ Onan, for not raising up seed to his brother (Gen 38:9-10).
- ⇨ All of the firstborn sons in Egypt (Ex 13:15).
- ⇨ The entire Egyptian army and their horses who pursued Israel (Ex 14:24-28).
- ⇨ Nadab and Abihu for offering strange fire to the Lord (Lev 10:1-2).
- ⇨ “*Much people*” died of snake bites because they murmured (Num 21:6).
- ⇨ 603,550 Israelite men for not believing they could take the promised land (Ex 38:26; Num 26:55; Deut 2:16-17).
- ⇨ 14,700 who died of a plague because of the rebellion of Korah (Num 16:49).

- ⇨ 24,000 who died of a plague because of mingling and committing fornication with the Moabites (Num 25:9).
- ⇨ 250 men who died during Korah's rebellion, the earth opening up and swallowing them (Num 26:10).
- ⇨ Uzzah, for touching the ark of the covenant (2 Sam 6:6-7).
- ⇨ 70,000 who died in a pestilence sent by the Lord because His anger was kindled against Israel (2 Sam 24:1,15).
- ⇨ An angel killed 185,000 soldiers of Sennacherib's Assyrian army (2 Kgs 19:35).
- ⇨ Ananias and Sapphira for lying to the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:2-10).

These are only deaths that were accomplished by the Lord, **without** human instrumentality. Admittedly, they are quite challenging to consider.

Now, in our text, the angel of the Lord smites Herod with a lethal blow, and his life is brought to a conclusion. **This whole matter is confusing to the flesh.** Herod kills James, yet he himself remains alive. He arrests Peter, and determines to do away with him as well – yet, he is not smitten by the Lord. Now, when he is not engaged in an initiative against the church as a whole, or any particular believer, he is struck down while giving an oration amidst the praises of the people.

Whatever may be said of the reign of Herod, he, like all kings, obtained his power from God. It is God who sets up kings, and it is God who deposes them. As it is written, *“And He changeth the times and the seasons: He removeth kings, and setteth up kings”* (Dan 2:21).

Heaping Up Wrath

There is such a thing as storing up Divine wrath. **Paul wrote that hardness of heart, and a lack of repentance, tends to store up wrath to be unleashed in a single outpouring:** *“But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against*

the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God” (Rom 2:5). **As sin continues, wrath is accumulating.** That is another reason why there is such a thing as **“greater damnation”** (Matt 23:14). That involves not only the nature of the sin, but its outworking tendency, as evidenced by the scribes and Pharisees robbing widows houses and being pretentious in their prayers. Both of those were ongoing activities.

BECAUSE HE GAVE NOT GOD THE GLORY

“... because he gave not God the glory . . .” Other versions read, *“did not give praise to God.”*^{NIV} *“he did not give the glory to God.”*^{CJB} *“had not given the*

worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness” (Psa 29:1-2). And again, *“Give unto the LORD, O ye kindreds of the people, give unto the LORD glory and strength. Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name: bring an offering, and come into his courts”* (Psa 96:8).

With a note of urgency Jeremiah told the people, *“Hear ye, and give ear; be not proud: for the LORD hath spoken. Give glory to the LORD your God, before He cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and, while ye look for light, He turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness”* (Jer 13:15-16). **Whatever your view of the patience and longsuffering of**

To “give God the glory” is to perceive Him as the Source, and give Him all the honor, and all the credit. It is to ascribe excellence, preeminence, dignity, and grace to Him. It is to recognize what He has done, and laud Him for it. The one who gives God the glory has recognized Him as the supreme ruler who possesses all power.

honor to God,”^{DOUAY} *“did not ascribe the honor to God,”*^{NAB} *“because he accepted the people's worship instead of giving the glory to God,”*^{NLT} *“he did not give God the glory (the preeminence and kingly majesty that belong to Him as the supreme Ruler),”*^{AMPLIFIED} and *“because he took the honor that belonged to God.”*^{CEV}

To *“give God the glory”* is to perceive Him as the Source, and give Him all the honor, and all the credit. It is to ascribe excellence, preeminence, dignity, and grace to Him. It is to recognize what He has done, and laud Him for it. The one who gives God the glory has recognized Him as the supreme ruler who possesses all power. Jesus taught us to do this in our prayers: *“For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen”* (Matt 6:13). In a stirring Psalm David wrote, *“Give unto the LORD, O ye mighty, give unto the LORD glory and strength. Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name;*

God may be, you must take words like this into account. Do not imagine for a moment that God is indifferent to the failure of men to give Him glory – even when they are heathens!

The Sin of Nebuchadnezzar

This was the sin that caused Nebuchadnezzar to enter into a seven year period of life that has no historic parallel. It was a period of time in which he lost his sanity, and roamed in the open field with the beasts of the earth, eating grass. In a single hour *“he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws”* (Dan 4:33). At the conclusion of that seven year period, Nebuchadnezzar said, *“And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honored Him*

that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom is from generation to generation: And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and **He doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth:** and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest thou? At the same time my reason returned unto me; and for the glory of my kingdom, mine honor and brightness returned unto me; and my counselors and my lords sought unto me; and I was established in my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added unto me. Now I Nebuchadnezzar **praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and His ways**

This kind of failure to give God glory is not far removed from our time. When, for example, some improvement in life has been experienced, there has been a phenomenal increase of giving praise to methodologies rather than to God. Let me give you some quotations from a contemporary plan that has become quite popular. In order not to detract from the gravity of the claims, I am withholding the name of the plan. At the latest count, it has been adopted by over 15,000 churches, and is a plan developed for Christians.

⇨ "We open the door to recovery by sharing our experience, strength, and hope with one another. This leads us to a great capacity for accepting

Him, and to Him, are **all things**" (Rom 11:36), then it cannot be right, in any sense of the word, to ascribe to a humanly-devised system or plan such things as the following:

- ⇨ Opening of "the door to recovery"
- ⇨ A "greater capacity to receive grace"
- ⇨ The creation of "peace" and "joy"
- ⇨ A "stronger relationship with God"
- ⇨ "God's healing power"
- ⇨ Being "changed."
- ⇨ "Growing spiritually"
- ⇨ "discovering . . . Jesus Christ."

Whether it sounds religiously correct or not, these are all things that can only be wrought by God through faith. It is as wrong to credit them to a plan as it was for Nebuchadnezzar to refer to Babylon as something he had built, or for Herod to accept the praise of those who said when they heard him speak, they had heard the voice of a god.

God Does Not Always Judge Immediately

Although God is always monitoring the affairs, words, and reactions of men, His judgments are not always immediate. For the sensitive of heart, this is indicative of "the longsuffering of God," which is actually a "space to repent" (Rev 2:21) – a token of His goodness that leads to repentance (Rom 2:4).

However, it is said of those who yield to the cries of the flesh, "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil" (Eccl 8:11). For them, the absence of judgment is an indication of Divine tolerance – and that is a most critical error in assessment.

Cases like that of Herod and others have been written up to assist us to think more soundly concerning God's attitude toward sin, the failure to obey Him, and the absence of giving Him glory. This is the real God of whom we are reading, and it is "the angel of the Lord" who is executing His judgment.

Sinners who are judged immediately are not to be considered the worst of sinners. They are examples, to be sure, but the discretionary judgment

Whether it sounds religiously correct or not, these are all things that can only be wrought by God through faith. It is as wrong to credit them to a plan as it was for Nebuchadnezzar to refer to Babylon as something he had built, or for Herod to accept the praise of those who said when they heard him speak, they had heard the voice of a god.

judgment: and those that walk in pride He is able to abase" (Dan 4:34-37).

The thing that brought Nebuchadnezzar down was his assessment of the city in which he ruled his kingdom: "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?" (Dan 4:30) It was "While the word was in the king's mouth," that "there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken: The kingdom is departed from thee. And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will" (Dan 4:31-32).

Not Far Removed From Our Time

God's grace and movement in our lives as we are working through issues that have robbed us of all hope for a better future."

⇨ "The recovery process enables us to move toward greater freedom from addictive, compulsive, and dysfunctional behaviors. The freedom creates a peace, serenity, joy, and most importantly a stronger relationship with God and others."

⇨ "The purpose of . . . is to fellowship and celebrate God's healing power in our lives through the '8 Recovery Principles. This experience allows us to 'be changed.' By working and applying these Biblical principles, we begin to grow spiritually. . . . As we progress through the program we discover our personal, loving, and forgiving High Power – Jesus Christ, the one and only true High Power."

There is a sterling example of giving glory for spiritual improvement to something other than God Himself. If it is really true that "of Him, and through

that was poured out upon them by no means indicated the approval of other sinners. Jesus pointed this out in two of His salient sayings.

⇒ The first was occasioned by a report of a malicious deed of Pilate. *“There were present at that season some that told him of the Galilaeans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galilaeans were sinners above all the Galilaeans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish”* (Luke 13:1-3).

⇒ The second was his extended answer to the very same report. *“Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish”* (Luke 13:4-5).

The very same principle is related in Paul’s reference to the Israelites who fell in the wilderness. *“Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; And did all eat the same spiritual meat; And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ. but with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness. now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come”* (1 Cor 10:1-11).

A point is made of all of the people participating in a genuine deliverance and very real sustenance.

- ⇒ All were under the cloud of protection.
- ⇒ All passed through the sea.
- ⇒ All were baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea.
- ⇒ All ate the same spiritual meat.
- ⇒ All drank the same spiritual drink.

However, with many of them, God was not well pleased. This was because of what they did.

- ⇒ They lusted after evil things.
- ⇒ Some of them were idolaters.
- ⇒ They sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to “play,” or “indulge in pagan revelry.”^{NIV}
- ⇒ They committed fornication.

As a result of God’s displeasure in those who sinned:

- ⇒ They were overthrown in the wilderness.
- ⇒ They were destroyed by serpents.
- ⇒ They were destroyed of the destroyer.
- ⇒ Three thousand were slain in one day.

Certain observations are made of this remarkably detailed record.

- ⇒ These things are our examples.
- ⇒ They are written that we “should not lust after evil things.”
- ⇒ They are written that we should not be “idolaters.”
- ⇒ They are written that we should not “commit fornication.”
- ⇒ They are written that we should not “tempt Christ.”
- ⇒ They are written that we should not “murmur.”
- ⇒ These things “happened to them as our examples.”^{NKJV}
- ⇒ They have been written “for our admonition.”

We Are Not the Standard of Evaluation

We are not to evaluate God’s response to sin by the way He has responded to our own conduct. **We are rather to learn from the accounts of His reaction to sin that are recorded in the Scriptures.** That is one of the grand

functions of the historical records of Divine judgments.

The record of Herod’s death manifests how God regards those who are filled with pride, which is evidenced by failing to give God glory.

HE WAS EATEN OF WORMS

“ . . . and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost.”

JOSEPHUS’ ACCOUNT OF HEROD

“Herod, having reigned three years over ALL Judea, (he had reigned over the tetrarchy of his brother Philip four years before this,) went down to Caesarea, and there exhibited shows and games in honor of Claudius, and made vows for his health. On the second day of these shows, he put on a garment made wholly of silver, and of a contecture most truly wonderful, and came into the theater early in the morning; at which time the silver of his garment, being illuminated by the first reflection of the sun’s rays, shone out after a surprising manner, and was so resplendent as to spread a horror over those who looked intently upon him; and presently his flatterers cried out, one from one place, and another from another, ‘He is a god:’ and they added, ‘Be thou merciful to us, for although we have hitherto revered thee only as a man, yet shall we henceforth own thee as superior to mortal nature.’ Nor did the king rebuke them, nor reject their impious flattery. But, looking up, he saw an owl on a certain rope over his head, and immediately conceived that this bird was to him a messenger of ill tidings; and he fell into the deepest sorrow; a severe pain also arose in his bowels, and he died after five days’ severe illness.”

..... This is the sum of the account given by Josephus, Ant. lib. xix. cap. 8, sect. 2.

Other versions read, *“his flesh was wasted away by worms, and he came to his end”*^{BBE} *“He was eaten away by worms and died,”*^{CJB} *“became infected with worms and died,”*^{CSB} *“he was eaten by worms and breathed his last,”*^{ESV} *“was eaten by maggots, and he died,”*^{GWN} *“he was consumed with worms and died,”*^{NLT} *“having been eaten of worms, he expired,”*^{YLT} *“was filled with maggots and died,”*^{LIVING} *“He was soon eaten by worms inside him, and he died,”*^{IE} and *“And in fearful agony he died.”*^{PHILLIPS}

As I have already mentioned, angels have often been dispatched to

cause death among the sons of men (2 Sam 24:16; 1 Chron 21:12,15,20,27; 2 Chron 32:21). Well ought we to thank God that these powerful and superior servants of the Lord have also been sent forth *“to minister for them who shall be the heirs of salvation”* (Heb 1:14). In this case, the angel caused a grievous internal disease through which Herod was eaten by worms. The very occurrence is most offensive to the mind, and some cannot conceive of God doing such a thing – **but He did!** This is the God to whom we have

been reconciled *“by the death of His Son”* (Rom 5:10). How will those who imagine God is kindly disposed toward everyone account for this harsh and painful death of Herod? Will they ascribe it to Satan, when God has said it was executed by *“the angel of the Lord,”* who only does the will of God?

As I have suggested, the worms were evidently within Herod, not worms that covered his outward frame. Also, apparently Herod did not die instantly

from this mortal blow – although the blow itself was instant. Josephus says he died *“after five days.”* So far as being a historian is concerned, there is no reason to doubt what he has said. He also wrote of this occasion that Herod *“did neither rebuke them [the people] nor reject their impious flattery. A severe pain arose in his belly, and began in a most violent manner. And when he was quite worn out by the pain in his belly for five days, he departed this life, in the 54th year of his age, and the 7th year of his reign.”* Once again we see that *“the way of transgressors is hard”* (Prov 13:15).

BUT – THE WORD OF GOD GREW AND MULTIPLIED

“24 But the word of God grew and multiplied.”

As with all inspired narration, activities are set within the context of the outworking of Divine purpose. That is the heart and core of Scripture – what the Lord is doing! Here, the Lord simply removes an obstacle after it has been duly confirmed that Herod was a wicked man. Like Pharaoh, he was *“endured with much longsuffering,”* even though he as a *“vessel of wrath, fitted for destruction”* (Rom 9:22).

It is the Divine manner to bring our attention back to primary things. This text is an example of that characteristic.

BUT

“But . . .” Other versions read, *“Then,”*^{CSB} *“and,”*^{GENEVA} and *“Meanwhile”*^{NLT} Though small, this is a significant word, being translated from the Greek word *δέ*. From the standpoint of language, this is a disjunctive – a word that stands between two contrasting statements. The lexical meaning of the word is *“by way of opposition and distinction; it is added to statements opposed to a preceding statement . . . it opposes persons to persons or things previously mentioned or thought of -- either with strong emphasis.”*^{THAYER}

Here we have a vivid picture of the Lord governing His Kingdom, for *“For the kingdom is the LORD’S: and He is the governor among the nations”* (Psa 22:28). In our text, on the one hand, He removes Herod because he did not give

God the glory – and that is why men are here. On the other hand, the



advancement of God’s cause will be realized. It will not be hindered by enemies or by circumstance. **In all of this God is showing that there is a level of His will that cannot be contravened.** Nothing can deter it that will, alter it, or make it null and void. Some confirmations of this include the following:

- ⇨ The flood.
- ⇨ The development of Abraham’s seed.
- ⇨ The deliverance of Israel from Egypt.
- ⇨ The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.

- ⇨ The birth of Jesus.
- ⇨ The death of Jesus.
- ⇨ The bruising of Satan’s head.
- ⇨ The resurrection of Jesus.
- ⇨ The ascension of Jesus.
- ⇨ The enthronement of Jesus.
- ⇨ The pouring out of the Holy Spirit.
- ⇨ The destruction of Jerusalem.
- ⇨ The appointment of death.
- ⇨ The second coming of Christ.
- ⇨ The glorification of those who are in Christ.
- ⇨ The day of judgment.

These are matters in which there can be no alteration, negation, or effective negotiation. It is because they all have to do with the carrying out of a Divine initiative. Neither the will of man nor his natural aptitude play any role in these things.

THE WORD GREW

“. . . the word of God grew . . .” Other versions read, *“continued to grow,”*^{NASB} *“continued to increase,”*^{NIV} *“continued to advance,”*^{RSV} *“went on increasing,”*^{BBE} *“went on growing,”*^{CJB}

“flourished,” ^{CSB} *“was proclaimed,”* ^{MRD} *“kept on increasing,”* ^{NET} *“continued to spread,”* ^{NLT} *“was spreading rapidly,”* ^{LIVING} *“prospered,”* ^{WEYMOUTH} and *“continued to gain ground.”* ^{PHILLIPS}

What does it mean for the Word of God to grow, increase, or advance? As used here, the word *“grow”* means *“to cause to grow, to augment . . . to cause to grow, to augment”* ^{THAYER} *“become more important,”* ^{UBS} *“the message (about the good news) kept spreading and growing stronger.”* ^{LOUW-NIDA}

Later, after a great awakening in

In our society, if the Word of God was suddenly to *“grow,”* there would probably be a similar book burning. **There would be an abandonment of writings and other forms of expression that are the fruit of man’s wisdom, and attention would be given the more to what God has declared.** That is the kind of thing that happens when the Word of God grows. Today, there is a phenomenal amount of purported *Christian* activity that has little or nothing to do with the Word of God. These days there are other books – other religious books – that are more popular than the Word of God. By

equity cannot enter. Yea, truth faileth: and he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey: and the LORD saw it, and it displeased him that there was no judgment” (Isa 59:14-15). **It is not that truth itself lost any of its properties. It was rather than the religious leaders let it go in preference of other words.** It did not **fall** in the street because it was weak, but it was not longer embraced. Truth did not **fail** because it became feeble, but because it was not proclaimed, and therefore could not do its work. This is the opposite of the Word growing.

Paul described this kind of situation more clearly. Here is what he said of such a time. *“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine: but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables”* (2 Tim 4:3-4). In such a circumstance, a person becomes an enemy because he tells the truth (Gal 4:16). **That kind of response is antithetical to Word of God growing.**

When the Word of God grows, people become more aware of what God has said about a matter. They become more conscious about the Lord Jesus. A proper conception of sin is entertained, and there is a prevailing interest in reconciliation to God and the obtaining of an eternal inheritance.

Ephesus, it is written *“So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed”* (Acts 19:20). **This describes a circumstance in which the Word of God is more and more received, and opposing thoughts are thrown down to the ground.** The Word becomes more dominant in the thinking of the people, and is dwelling richly in their hearts (Col 3:16). It is more prominent in speaking, and there is more of an appetite for it. When the Word of God *“grows,”* there is a more thorough declaration of what God has revealed. The *“whole counsel of God”* is made known. In such a circumstance, competing bodies of knowledge become less popular, and the Word of God is preferred.

In Ephesus, when the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified, *“many that believed came, and confessed, and showed their deeds. Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver”* (Acts 19:19). It is after that, that the text affirms, *“So mightily grew the Word of God and prevailed.”*

more popular, I mean they are read more, quoted more, and talked about more. There are other words that are growing – other messages, and other proclamations. I have heard many sermons that had made very few references to the Word of God, and some that have contained none at all. **In such a case, the Word of God is not growing.** The people are not being brought to think about what God has revealed, what He has spoken, and the things He has accented.

When the Word of God grows, people become more aware of what God has said about a matter. They become more conscious about the Lord Jesus. A proper conception of sin is entertained, and there is a prevailing interest in reconciliation to God and the obtaining of an eternal inheritance. All of this, and more, was taking place in our text.

The Time When Truth Fails

God described a time that existed in Isaiah’s day. It is worthy of note because it parallels the circumstances of our time. *“And judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off: for truth is fallen in the street, and*

Jesus spoke to people who did not believe Him **because** He told them the truth (John 8:45). If He had told them what the scribes had said, He would have been readily received. If He had quoted the traditions of the elders, those very people would have followed Him zealously. **When PEOPLE become prominent, there is a corresponding cessation of the growth of the Word.**

THE WORD MULTIPLIED

“But the word of God . . . multiplied.” Other versions read, *“spread,”* ^{NIV} *“gain adherents,”* ^{NRSV} *“spread itself,”* ^{DARBY} *“win many followers,”* ^{GWN} *“there were many new believers,”* ^{NLT} *“influencing more and more people. The group of believers became larger and larger,”* ^{IE} *“converts were multiplied,”* ^{WEYMOUTH} and *“increase its influence.”* ^{PHILLIPS}

The Word of God is described as *“quick and powerful,”* or *“living and active,”* ^{NIV} Also, although those who declare it may be bound, *“the Word of God is not bound”* (1 Tim 2:9). It works within those who embrace it, and does so effectively, causing the will of God to be lived out. Therefore it is written, *“For*

*this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, **the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe***"(1 Thess 2:13).

When men receive the word of God, it is not like receiving a creed, or a historical statement, or a position. **The Word of God causes things to take place**

in those who believe it. It *"effectively works in you who believe."*^{NKJV} This is of such a dynamic nature that when these believers are persecuted, and even scattered abroad, they go *"everywhere preaching the Word"* (Acts 8:4). **That is an example of the Word of God multiplying.** It spreads within believers and through them to others. In this way, it grows exponentially – not in its content, but in its effectiveness. When

freely declared, it accomplishes the purpose for which God sent it (Isa 55:11).

Thus, from a very broad point of view, our text proclaims the twofold work of the Lord. 1) The saving and establishment of believers (1 Tim 1:15; 2 Tim 3:16-17), and 2) Making the enemies of His Son His footstool (2 Cor 15:27-28; Heb 10:13). These processes are the Kingdom of God advancing.

BARNABAS AND SAUL FULFILLED THEIR MINISTRY

“²⁵ And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem, when they had fulfilled their ministry, and took with them John, whose surname was Mark.”

The narrative now returns to Barnabas and Saul. In fact, from this point through the conclusion of the book of Acts, the attention will be turned to the ministry of Paul.

BARNABAS AND SAUL RETURNED FROM JERUSALEM

“And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem . . .”

Following the conversion of the Gentiles at the house of Cornelius, certain prophets had come from Jerusalem to Antioch. During that time, *“one of them named Agabus”* had *“signified by the Spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world”* (Acts 11:28). Upon hearing this, and with the discernment that this was a word from God, and with an obvious immediacy that is birthed by faith, *“the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea”* (Acts 11:29). They were not like the Corinthians, who also determined to send relief to the *“poor saints in Jerusalem”* (Rom 15:26), yet tarried for more than a year without actually doing it (2 Cor 8:10; 9:2). These brethren gathered the monies immediately, and *“sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul”* (Acts 11:30). Now Barnabas and Saul return from that trip to Jerusalem to Antioch, from whence they had been

sent (Acts 11:26-28).

WHEN THEY HAD FULFILLED THEIR MINISTRY

when they had fulfilled their ministry . . .” Other versions read, *“finished their mission,”*^{NIV} *“after completing their mission,”*^{NRSV} *“when their work was ended,”*^{BBE} *“having completed their errand,”*^{CJB} *“had completed their relief mission,”*^{CSB} *“fulfilled their ministrations,”*^{ERV} *“completed their service,”*^{ESV} *“delivered the contribution,”*^{GWN} *“completed their task,”*^{NJB} *“fulfilled their office,”*^{PNT} *“finished their business,”*^{LIVING} *“finished their work,”*^{IE} *“having discharged their mission,”*^{WEYMOUTH} and *“finished their helpful service.”*^{WILLIAMS}

Barnabas and Saul delivered to

exhibiting the love of the brethren and the faithfulness of God. They left Jerusalem only when that work had been completed.

Finishing the Work

The very concept of finishing or completing a ministry, or service, or commission, is refreshing to consider. **This thought reflects the nature of the Kingdom of God, which involves doing good works that have been “ordained that we should walk in them”** (Eph 2:10). When the Scriptures speak of being *“workers together with”* God, or *“laborers together with God,”* it is not speaking of menial and meaningless activity or motion (1 Cor 3:9; 6:1). Working in God’s vineyard (Matt 20:1), or working in the harvesting of the fields (John 4:35) is not purposeless activity. **In the kingdom of**

In the kingdom of God, work is an activity in which something is accomplished, completed, finished, or fulfilled.

the elders the offering that had been gathered for the poor saints in Jerusalem. The purpose for the offering was to bring relief to brethren in Judaea who suffered in the aftermath of the prophesied famine. Barnabas and Saul were chosen to deliver the relief to the elders in a timely manner, thereby

God, work is an activity in which something is accomplished, completed, finished, or fulfilled. Paul said that he did not run uncertainly, or beat the air. That is, he was not like a runner who simply frolicked about in the open spaces with no goal, or a boxer who shadow-boxed, never really facing an opponent (1

Cor 9:26).

In fact, Paul was deeply concerned about his labor being vain, never really yielding the intended results (Gal 4:11; Phil 2:16; 1 Thess 3:5). There is a category of human effort that is pointless, wasted, and in vain: *“Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain”* (Psa 127:1). **This kind of work is one that is never brought to a conclusion.** It is like the man who *“began to build, and was not able to finish”* (Lk 14:29-30).

through which the completion is wrought (1 Tim 4:1).

Unfortunately, owing to a great falling away, the landscape of Christianity is cluttered with unfinished works – people who started, but did not finish. They are like the 603,550 men of Israel who came out of Egypt, but fell in the wilderness, never entering the promised land for which they were delivered. They are like Israel, who, under the figure of Ephraim, was like a *“cake not turned”* – half-baked, and unsuitable for consumption (Hos 7:8).

is seen in their association with the tenured saints, not their work and influence among their peers. I do not believe you will find an exception to this rule. Some examples include the following.

- ⇒ Moses’ sister Miriam, who watched her infant brother, and spoke to Pharaoh’s daughter concerning the his care (Ex 2:4-9).
- ⇒ Samuel, who ministered in the Tabernacle under the administration of Eli (1 Sam 2:18).
- ⇒ The young Jewish maiden who informed Naaman of a prophet in Israel (2 Kgs 5:2-4).
- ⇒ Jeremiah, who was set apart to God from his mother’s womb (Jer 1:5-7).
- ⇒ John the Baptist, who *“grew and waxed strong in spirit”* (Luke 1:80).
- ⇒ The Lord Jesus, who *“increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man,”* and, at twelve confounded the doctors of the Law (Luke 2:46-47,52).

While I do not wish to dwell on this subject, it ought to be apparent that, in Scripture, the value of young believers is seen in their association with the tenured saints, not their work and influence among their peers.

One of the ways God is glorified is in a work that is finished – brought to its intended culmination. Zerubbabel was assured that the work he commenced would, in fact, be *“finished.”* Zechariah was told to say, *“The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also finish it; and thou shalt know that the LORD of hosts hath sent me unto you”* (Zech 4:9).

Jesus Himself declared that His food was not only to do the Father’s will, but to complete His work. *“My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish His work”* (John 4:34). In fact, the works were given to Him to finish. As He said, *“the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me”* (John 5:36). **An unfinished work brings no glory to God! That is why failing to grow, backsliding, drawing back, and falling away are such despicable transgressions!** The Lord is noted for finishing His work (Rom 9:28), and performing what He has begun *“until the day of Christ”* (Phil 1:6). If this does not happen, it is only because thoughtless men have departed *“from the faith,”* which is the appointed means

Barnabas and Saul were not such men. They set out to do a holy work, and did not leave until it was accomplished.

THEY TOOK JOHN MARK WITH THEM

“. . . and took with them John, whose surname was Mark.” Other versions read, *“who was also called Mark,”*^{NASB} and *“whose other name was Mark.”*^{NRSV}

This was the son of the woman at whose home the disciples were found praying when Peter was released (Acts 12:12). It is apparent that, to some extent, he was a spiritually distinctive young man in Jerusalem, as Timothy was in the area of Derby and Lystra (Acts 16:1). Barnabas and Saul took note of this young believer, and *“took”* him *“with them.”* Later, he will be described as their *“minister,”* or *“helper”* (Acts 13:5).

You may recall that Joshua was Moses’ *“minister”* (Ex 24:13; Josh 1:1). Elisha occupied a similar role toward Elijah (1 Kgs 19:19; 2 Kgs 2:1-9).

While I do not wish to dwell on this subject, it ought to be apparent that, in Scripture, the value of young believers

The thing to be seen in this text is the manner in which godly men perceived spiritually unusual youth. With the contemporary penchant for sequestering young people, the kind of assessment made known in this text is most unusual. We have even come to the point where special ministers are being appointed for the youth. **In this text, special youth were appointed to minister to Kingdom laborers.** In this manner, they became more acquainted with the manner of the kingdom, as well as the focus and way of life of holy men. **In my judgment, there is no way to effectively assess the damage that is being done to the body of Christ by the current manner in which young people are being cultured by the churches.**

This young man, John Mark, is mentioned eight times in Scripture (Acts 12:12,25; 15:37,39; Col 4:10; 2 Tim 4:11; Phile 1:24; 1 Pet 5:13).

Surnamed

Others who are said to have been *“surnamed,”* or given another name,

include the following.

- ⇨ Jacob (supplanter), who was surnamed *“Israel”* (he will rule)– the name used to refer to God’s people – Isa 44:5; 45:4.
- ⇨ Lebbaeus (a man of heart), an apostle *“whose surname was Thaddeus”* (large-hearted, courageous) – Matt 10:3.
- ⇨ James (supplanter) and John (Jehovah is a gracious giver): Jesus *“surnamed them Boanerges”* (sons of thunder) – Mk 3:17.
- ⇨ Judas (he shall be praised, *“surnamed Iscariot”* (inhabitant of Kerioth) – Lk 22:3.
- ⇨ Joseph (let him add) called Barsabas (son of Sabas), *“who was surnamed Matthias”* (gift of God– Acts 1:23.

- ⇨ Joses (exalted), *“who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas”* (son of consolation) – Acts 4:36).
- ⇨ Simon (a hearing), *“whose surname is Peter”* (a rock, or stone) – Acts 10:5).
- ⇨ Judas (he shall be praised), chief among the brethren in Jerusalem, *“surnamed Barsabas”* (son of Sabas) – Acts 15:22).
- ⇨ Abram’s (exalted father) name was changed to Abraham (father of a multitude) – Gen 17:5
- ⇨ Sarai’s (princess) name was changed to Sarah (noble woman, mother of nations – Gen 17:15-16).

In Scripture, names have a certain ministry. **Even in their names, people were associated with their character, particularly as it related to**

the work of the Lord. This is a contribution that the Israelites, a Divinely cultured nation, has made to the world. It is good that believers carry it forward, as in this text. Too, it is good to see people as they relate to the work of the Lord.

In this text, *“John”* (Jehovah is a gracious giver) was renamed *“Mark”* (a defense). It appears as though they saw in this young man the potential of being a great defender of the faith. Ultimately, he did, in fact, measure up to the name, writing the Gospel of Mark, and serving the Lord in other lands. Historians say of him, *“Was born of Jewish parents of the tribe of Levi. He is supposed to have been converted to Christianity by Peter, whom he served as an amanuensis, and under whose inspection he wrote his Gospel in the Greek language. Mark was dragged to pieces by the people of Alexandria, at the great solemnity of Serapis their idol, ending his life under their merciless hands.”*

CONCLUSION

It should be apparent that there is character in Scripture as well as information. The nature of God is revealed in it as well as His will. The reports that are made are more than a historical statement. They reflect Divine priorities, the way in which the Lord works, and how people are impacted by both faith and unbelief.

It is the nature of truth to permeate the lives of those who love and believe it. It also sheds light on the environment into which it is introduced. Were it not for the truth of the Gospel, the true character of Herod could not

have been truly seen. The caliber of men like Peter would also have been hidden. What kind of change would ever have been wrought in Saul of Tarsus if the truth of the Gospel had not been declared and lived out?

All of this confirms the necessity and priority of the continued declaration and exposition of the Gospel of Christ. It is a sin of unspeakable magnitude to exchange the emphasis of the Gospel for some human accent. No person can expect the work of God to be done independently of the record He has given of His Son (1 John 5:10-11). The notion that the Gospel has only to do with the

extrication of men from sin is an error that has staggering implications. First, it negates the great percentage of the epistles, which contain, in fact, a delineation of the Gospel. Little of the Gospel of Christ can even be known without the details of the epistles. When these writings are withheld from the people, the Gospel cannot be considered. **The book of Acts is a revelation of the government of Jesus being carried out among men.** It has to do with the establishment of believers, and the overthrow of the wicked. Each is done in a timely and appropriate manner, bringing glory to God and edification to saints.

Our next Hungry Saints Meeting will be held on Friday, 7/4/08. We will continue our current series of lessons on the book of Acts. The Fifty-sixth lesson will cover verses 1 through 12 of the thirteenth chapter: **“THE CALLING OF BARNABAS AND SAUL.” Now, in the book of Acts, the activities of Peter, with a single exception, cease to be mentioned. Peter is referenced in Acts 15:7, where he again reported how God had made a choice among them, that the Gentiles should hear the Gospel through him. Apart from that, we read no more of Peter in the Acts. Our attention will now be turned to the labors of Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles. Initially, he will accompany Barnabas, as both of them are called by the Holy Spirit to a special work. However, within a relatively short period of time, he will be the dominate laborer in this book. Our meeting will begin at 7:00 P.M. You are invited to bring your family and friends for fellowship around the Word of God. Refreshments are served afterward, with a time of extended fellowship for everyone.**

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The Next Refreshing Waters Renewal #19

August 12-14, 2006
First Christian Church
Carl Junction, MO

Theme:

THE GOSPEL IN THE EPISTLES

Proclaiming and expounding the necessity of constant exposure to the Gospel of Christ, and its prominence in the Epistles. This Renewal is designed to awaken believers to the nature and content of the Gospel.