

Acts 12:19–25

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[0 : 0 0] Acts 12, 19 through 25, on page 1020 of the White Bibles. Please stand for the reading of God's Word. And after Herod searched for him and did not find him, he examined the sentries and ordered that they should be put to death.

Then he went down from Judea to Caesarea and spent time there. Now Herod was angry with the people of Tyre and Sidon, and they came to him with one accord, and having persuaded Blastus, the king's chamberlain, they asked for peace, because their country depended on the king's country for food.

On an appointed day, Herod put on his royal robes, took his seat upon the throne, and delivered an oration to them. And the people were shouting, the voice of a god and not of a man.

Immediately an angel of the Lord struck him down, because he did not give God the glory, and he was eaten by worms and breathed his last. But the word of God increased and multiplied.

And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem when they had completed their service, bringing with them John, whose other name was Mark. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

[1 : 1 9] You may be seated. Let's pray.

Let's pray. Dear God, thank you that you are God, and we are graced to understand a smidgen of who you are.

But this morning, Lord, we ask that you would speak to us. As they say, give us fresh manna and allow us the grace in order to respond correctly.

In Jesus' name, amen. Amen. What is the cost of glory? What is gained by attaining glory?

Or what is lost by getting glory? And then what's the cost? You got countless men and women throughout history, some glorious, some inglorious.

[2 : 3 2] And for this book of Acts, Luke recounts for us that those who would be summed up as those who would pursue glory, or you can sum these few verses up as the pursuit of glory.

Either by God through the triumph of his word over the hard hearts of wicked men, as we are weak-willed, and he has a way of turning weak-willed men into instruments of righteousness for his glory.

It's either by that or you run into, in Acts, a few characters in the scripture that seek to attain glory for their own self. As the church is scattered, in some instances, you see persecution, people locked in jails, or at least they're insisting on their own way.

You see, and in one sense, there's a battle for the attaining of glory. So what's the cost of glory? Two opposing pursuits of glory.

It's either the glory of God or the glory of man. And in today's text, you see in such few verses, it's never, it's actually not really a tug of war because we know who wins.

[4 : 02] The people pursuing glory for themselves, it's like they're playing exhibition. When God's on All Star, if you play 2K, because when dealing with the one who himself is glorious, everybody else falls short.

The battle for glory is seen within what I would call three words. Three words. For starters, you get the word of Herod.

The word of Herod. Just look at verse 20. Now Herod was angry with the people of Tyre and Sidon, and they came to him with one accord, and having persuaded Blastus, the king's chamberlain, they asked for peace because their country depended on the king's country for food.

Right away, while it does not necessarily tell us the words used by Herod, Luke's implication here is that King Herod Agrippa I, his anger has led him to declare war on Tyre and Sidon.

Anger over what? Well, he just lost Peter, and as you read in verse 19, he searched for him and didn't find him, so he's off to Caesarea.

[5 : 32] Now, no one actually really knows why he was angry with Tyre and Sidon. Nobody can really say, but he was angry nonetheless.

And whether he was angry with them for something they specifically did or maybe it's just in and of himself, it led him to keep food away from them in the middle of a famine.

I mean, insult to injury. But why them? Why Tyre and Sidon? But why this seemingly abrupt interruption into the introduction of Luke's account of Tyre and Sidon?

Now, you might remember Tyre and Sidon throughout the text or throughout the Bible as a whole. Two cities about 20 miles apart from each other, about 12 miles north of Jerusalem.

Jerusalem, Phoenician cities, nowadays Lebanon. The earliest mention of Tyre is in the book of Joshua. You see Sidon named after Canaan's son.

[6 : 41] Two cities mentioned to have helped furnish David's temple as they brought trees and even in the book of Ezra, same thing. But then you also see them conquered by a few people, Nebuchadnezzar, Alexander the Great.

And as you get to the New Testament, you see them under Rome. And this is where Herod is placed over the Phoenician territories. Even Christ mentioned these two cities in pronouncing judgment over those unrepentant cities.

He compares them to the pagan cities of Tyre and Sidon. Just as a comparison to see, no man, if they, it will be worse for you than for Tyre and Sidon on a day of judgment.

But then even take a look at King Herod Agrippa I and his dealing with people before the book of Acts transfers over to Saul as the main character.

character, the main focus, were met with Herod Agrippa I, Herod being the title bestowed upon the people of his household.

[7 : 54] They're Edomites, descendants of Esau. Herod Agrippa I was the grandson of Herod the Great who sought to murder Christ even as a baby.

Agrippa's uncle, Herod Antipas, was the ruler of Galilee during Jesus' ministry and was the one who ordered the beheading of John the Baptist.

Agrippa's own father was trained under Caesar Augustus and was eventually murdered by Herod Antipas. And now why do I mention these facts about Herod is because the whole Herodian lifestyle, they were well acquainted with Jesus and the Jews and the church eventually.

They were well acquainted with what was happening. But when we get to this Herod, Agrippa I, and his anger towards Tyre and Sidon, one would have to wonder if we are witnessing a response to just Peter's having escaped prison.

If he's not angry at something specific, but it's more so, I got to take it out on somebody. I just wonder that perhaps if his anger towards them wasn't towards them at all, it was simply a response to a failed attempt to curry more glory and acclaim for himself by ridding Jewish leaders of someone like Peter who would have sent Herod's popularity through the roof.

[9 : 28] But take a look at what happens with the people of Tyre and Sidon. Somehow they managed to get a member of Herod's chamberlain, the king's court, to actually hear their cause.

Hey, bruh, we hungry, we're dying, we need some food, can you please talk to your boss? And they finally get the ear of this guy, Blastus.

That's a cool name. Blastus. So they finally get his ear for some resources. Take a look at verse 21.

It says, on an appointed day, Herod put on his royal robes, took his seat upon the throne, and delivered an oration to them.

Herod then takes the opportunity for himself to relish in Tyre and Sidon's groveling. I just want to, I want to, I'm going to milk this for everything it's worth.

[10 : 31] He awaits appointed day. I mean, check out how Luke kind of lays it out. He awaits appointed, an appointed day. This could have been a celebration that he put on yearly, or some say it was Caesar's birthday that they celebrated, that he actually helped celebrate yearly.

Side note, if it was Caesar's birthday, it makes Peter's escape about 11 months before that, just for the timeline of things. But evidently, Herod waits for the day when everybody can have all eyes on him.

He waits for the day that everybody can be like, yo, look at what he's doing. But he doesn't stop there, Luke. He doesn't stop there. Herod puts on royal clothes. Josephus, again, describes the clothes of Herod a little bit more specific than what Luke does.

He says, Josephus says, they were pure silver and they shined in the sun. Again, spotlight on him. Luke goes on, he sat on the throne.

It's funny, neither Luke nor Josephus mixed words here. They both mention he sat on the throne. Herod takes his seat on the throne in order to address the needs of the people in a way that would cause them to remember who it is that is acting on their behalf this day.

[11 : 59] I want you to know who it is that's going to be able to feed you, even though you're the one that is causing us to be hungry. And you can almost imagine Herod, again, milking every word, savoring every direction, manipulating every decree.

After all, that is what the show was for. That is what the spectacle was for, to flaunt, to flex some glory for himself.

Herod's oration in verse 21 to the people after declaring war on the people would be his attempt to procure glory from the people.

There's a word from Herod and it's a word for himself so that he can be the one that they look to for deliverance.

But you don't just get a word from Herod, you also have the words of the people. Look at verse 22 and 23. He says, and the people were shouting the voice of God and not of man.

[13 : 09] Immediately an angel of the Lord struck him down because he did not give God the glory and he was eaten by worms and breathed his last. The words of the people of Tyre and Sidon, the words are of them heralding Herod.

Say that three times fast. heralding Herod as God. It's one thing to praise somebody who isn't worth it. It's another thing to say he's God.

It's a heinous action towards Herod. But we also have to understand that the result of Herod's actions are what the people are giving.

Or let me say it another way. People are responding to what Herod is giving them. I'm not trying to take the responsibility off them, but this is a word to the leaders. People respond to what you do.

Or should I say what you don't do. The leadership gone awry. It's a mutiny towards the God of the universe. It's what happens when the glory of God is not properly affixed and you get a people who seek to dethrone God for that which is no God at all.

[14 : 25] One of my favorite athletes my wife would make fun of me for this but one of my favorite athletes is a wrestler from WWE named Bobby Rude.

I've followed Bobby Rude for years. Right? He's got a gimmick. He's got one of the top introductions now in wrestling history because he actually takes from a guy named Rick Flair and he actually uses some of his flair in his introduction.

Top meaning Undertaker, Stone Cold, all the other guys and then him. Right? So when he comes out, Bobby Rude, they call him the glorious Bobby Rude and when he comes out, it goes pitch black and then all of a sudden this one spotlight just glorious and it's just him and he walks down with his hands up but the part that makes it unique from everybody else is the fact that everybody in the crowd, if you watch, they all have their hands up in response to the glorious Bobby Rude.

I mean, that's an effect. That's an effect. What's special about that is people will respond to what is magnificent.

The words and the praises of the people and their ascribing false deity to King Herod is what spits in the face of the guy, of the God who is true deity.

[16 : 04] They're responding to someone incorrectly. The crazy part about King Herod is this isn't his first time with this type of interaction with the people.

Herod made a living of gaining support of Rome and of the Jews. Richard Longenecker says it like this. First, when Agrippa I was in Rome, he was a cosmopolitan Roman.

When he was in Rome, he was a cosmopolitan Roman. But when he was in Jerusalem, he acted the part of an observant Jew. He acted the part of an observant Jew.

If you come to youth group on Thursday nights, we've been going through the Sermon on the Mount and there's a word that keeps repeating through our text, hypocrite. And every time I get to it, I ask somebody, what does it mean?

And finally, I think they're getting it, an actor. And I think Luke is also portraying this. He's acting right here. Longenecker is saying the same thing.

[17 : 11] There's even a saying in the Mishnah about King Herod, Agrippa I, of how he was a wonderful man and how he must have studied under Gamaliel.

Longenecker actually finishes his quotes about Herod, Agrippa, with a little snippet that goes like this. And the festival of tabernacles, sucketh, in accordance with the biblical prescription written in Deuteronomy 17, 14 through 20, which says that you should have no other king of a foreign nation over you, concerning the laws of the kingdom, that the king was to read publicly.

The Mishnah says King Agrippa received it standing and read it standing as a sign of respect. And when he reached the part in Deuteronomy 17 that says you may not put a foreigner over you who is not your brother, the Mishnah says his eyes flowed with tears because he was an Edomite ancestry.

But the people around him called out, our brother art thou, our brother art thou. No, no, no, it's okay. You're one of us.

It's okay. what we get is the fact that Herod was your fawning man-pleaser.

[18 : 41] He's always been a man-pleaser. And upon seeing the positive reaction from the Jews after beheading James, you get the sense that he longs for something like this since he missed out on this glory when Peter escaped.

Let me ask you a question. What's leading you into worship? Who's leading you into worship? I can even ask, who are you leading into worship?

That's where we get in verse 23 because it takes an epic turn in verse 23. It gives us an epic answer. Immediately, an angel of the Lord struck him down because he did not give God the glory.

And he was eaten by worms and breathed his last. Yet we see this angel yet again, not to set Peter free, but an angel of death.

Luke helps us out by saying it's because he didn't give God glory. It would seem that God's anger was kindled because of the sacrilege of proud men that not only did not honor God but put Herod in the place of God.

[20 : 03] It's one thing to not honor God, but it's another thing to put someone who's not God in the place of God. That, again, spits in the face of God. The consequence for trying to usurp the title of God and attach anything else to God, the consequence is still death.

in a song a friend of mine and I have coming out called Incommunicable, the chorus simply says there's some things that he will share and there's some things that he won't.

Glory. Herod was struck down just as even Josephus described. Luke mentions he's eaten by worms perhaps to even show that he didn't die right away.

Josephus mentions he died about five days later and the reason is because he didn't give glory to God because he did not correct the people because with all the knowledge he had about Jewish customs And with all the knowledge he had about Jesus, he failed to remember the first command or the second command of you don't know how you read the commandments.

Thou shall not have any God before thee. Herod should have taken those words to heart. But you know what? I'm guessing Theophilus as he's reading the words of Luke, I'm guessing he's probably remembering some of what Luke said in his gospel.

[21 : 39] Chapter 1 verse 52 the Magnificat as he says as Mary says, he has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted the humble.

Or even later in Luke 14 11, he says, for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled and he who humbles himself will what? Be exalted. Well, you have a word of Herod, you got a word of the people, but it doesn't end there as you can see in verse 24 and 25, you get the word of God.

You get the word of God and I love the way it starts. But the word of God increased and multiplied. But the word of God increased and multiplied.

The contrast to Herod's advances, the contrast to his killings and imprisonments, the contrast even the scattering and the stoning of Stephen and the contrast is that the word of God continues to go forth.

Verse 24, a refrain we return to a few times in Acts, a refrain that anchors what we're talking about, that no matter what happens, the word of God's still going forth, bruh.

[23 : 00] No matter what happens, hey, God's still got a plan. There's a singer named Karen Clark Sheard, sings a song back in the day, I was there for the recording, D.C., I don't remember what year, she says, the safest place in the whole wide world is in the will of God.

We see tyrants taken away. We see this tyrant taken away and the church no longer has to say, hey, Herod, let me be great. What's up?

Why are you coming at us? But you know what? They get a chance to bypass the begging of Herod because they serve a God who is great.

The example is meant to encourage us today that the glorification of God actually has you in mind. It's not a never mind of you.

The glorification of God actually is your best life, is actually where you find your safe place. despite what the world might say.

[24 : 15] Remember, He will exalt you. The word that the people are supposed to ascribe to deity is the word of God because it's the words of God.

It's God who is speaking. And it is God who will bless the witness of the church because they are witnessing about the one who is the true king, the preeminent one, primetime center of attention.

And before we even head to Antioch to witness the start of the first missionary journey by Saul, we pause for a second just to think about what all God has done on our behalf thus far.

Yes, we are set back. Yes, we have trials. Yes, the church was scattered. Yes, people have, yes, even Peter probably thought he was going to die. But the word of God increased despite the words of wrath by Herod, despite the word of false worship by the people.

We continually, even today, get a chance to behold the grace of the word of God at work, the word of God who is almighty.

[25 : 34] Are you okay with that? Are you okay with God being glorified alone and not having an end on that? I know because I'm me.

I try to wiggle myself into some of his glory. He doesn't take just Herod. We can look at our own hearts because what Luke means by the word of God increase and multiplies is that there continues to be in season and out of season someone around to preach the word, but it doesn't stop there, ladies and gentlemen.

It also means that there are people who are receptive and responsive to the word. The word of God increase and multiply. Well, thanks be to God.

That's the call for us even today. Will you respond to God's word? God. The glory of God is the highest priority or should be the highest priority of God's people.

So what's it going to cost? What's the glory cost? That while in the midst of setbacks, in the midst of the foreboding of our own hearts, in the midst of dealing with trials and the flesh and the world and the devil, in the midst of dealing with gun violence and or being pulled over by the cops for no reason or whatever you might be going through, does God's glory matter in the midst of that and is there a reason for that to glorify God?

[27 : 18] What voice are you speaking or listening to? There's a song we used to sing back in the day. It was, whose report will you believe?

And the crowd will respond, we shall believe the report of the Lord. I mean, we went in for like ever. Whose report? I mean, it was the same, you know, I mean, his report said, I mean, but we would go in, it was a call and response because it was like, do you believe that God's word is true?

And as a young age, I mean, I remember those things. what God has to say is what matters. Whose report will you believe? Whose voice are you listening to?

We serve a God that while I'm asking what's it going to cost, we serve a God who at great cost wraps himself in human flesh and comes down and hangs bleed and dies for wicked men who, while we were yet sinners, joyfully goes to the cross willfully.

He is the God that pays the ultimate cost for glory. I don't want to make light of the martyrs, but they didn't carry the sin of the world.

[28 : 46] And then you add on the martyrs, you're like, they knew what they were getting into. What's it cost? So that the true king of kings can be glorified, which is why this king of kings can turn to us and say, here's the cost of glorifying Christ.

This is what it will cost you, your life. The fact that Christ says, if I be lifted up, I'll do the drawing of all men under myself.

Do you glorify God today? And as I always say, lips and life, words and works. Continue to listen to the voice of God.

Let's pray. Lord, as one poet said, it's going to cost everything, and are we willing to give up everything?

Lord, we thank you that you gave up what could have been exalted so that you can be counted lowly, even to the point of death, even death on a cross.

[30 : 09] And today, Lord, we ask that you be glorified in our lives. And wherever areas in our lives that we do not glorify you, would you please highlight them and give us the grace and strength to actually respond well and help us behold you properly as God.

In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.