

July 4th – Pride Precedes Punishment

“Then immediately an angel of the Lord struck him, because he did not give glory to God. And he was eaten by worms and died.” (Acts 12:23)

Most people would not call this one of the most pleasant verses in the Bible, but Christians can actually take comfort in this passage. It starts with a man named Herod. History tells us that Herod (the grandson of Herod the Great) had ran up quite a few debts in Rome, so he fled to Palestine. Once the Emperor Tiberius passed away, Herod was released from his imprisonment and made ruler over northern Palestine. From there, he persecuted many Christians in an attempt to appease the Jews.

Acts 12 tells us that Herod was displeased with the people of Tyre and Sidon, residents in his jurisdiction living on the Mediterranean coast. The residents of Tyre and Sidon acted very shrewdly – they befriended Herod’s personal aide. Through their strategic connection, they were able to talk Herod into a celebration in the Emperor’s honor. The historian Josephus tells us that Herod was arrayed in a robe of pure silver when he arrived at the celebration, and that he gave a moving oration (Acts 12:21).

In their attempts to butter Herod up, the crowds cried out, “The voice of a god and not of a man!” Herod had two choices – he could rebuke their cries of deity, or he could soak it up like a sponge. To his demise, he choice the latter and suffered the judgment of God “because he did not give glory to God.” He went from wowing the crowds to feeding the worms in almost no time. The lesson is clear – it is dangerous for us to rob God of His glory. It’s our privilege and duty to deflect all praise and point it to the Lord.