**The Result of Peter’s Jailbreak**

(Acts 12:18-25)

By Pastor Ricky Kurth

 A man passed out at work one day, and woke up alone in a hospital bed. As he lay there trying to figure out what had happened to him, the phone next to his bed rang. When he answered it, a doctor introduced himself and said, “We just got your test results back, and you have a disease that is so *extremely* contagious, I’m afraid to even enter your room. So I’m calling to tell you that we’re putting you on a strict diet of nothing but thin crust pizza.” The man asked, “Will that help me?” The doctor replied, “No, but it’s the only thing we can slide under the door.”

 Speaking of results like *test* results, in our last couple of lessons, we saw how God broke Peter out of jail, and now we’re going to see the *result* of his jailbreak. Acts 12:18 begins,

 **“Now as soon as it was day, there was no small stir among the soldiers, what was become of Peter.”**

As you may recall, Peter’s jailbreak happened at night. As soon as it was day, the guards discovered that Peter was no longer a guest in their fine establishment! This caused *no small stir* among his guards, because soldiers in ancient times were responsible for their prisoners *with their very lives.* We see an example of this in I Kings 20:39, where

 **“…a man…brought a man unto me, and said, Keep this man: *if by any means he be missing, then shall thy life be for his life…*”**

That’s how it was in the Old Testament, and we know that the Romans had the same policy, for when God broke Paul out of a Roman jail,

**“…there was a great earthquake…*and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed.* And the keeper of the prison…seeing the prison doors open…drew out his sword, *and would have killed himself,* supposing that the prisoners had been fled” (Acts 16:26,27).**

Paul stopped him from taking his life, but you can tell from what it says there that he figured a quick death was better than whatever death Rome would give him for letting his prisoners escape.

 So here in Acts 12, you can just picture the scene as the 16 soldiers who were guarding Peter ran around looking for him like chickens with their heads chopped off. I mean, James Bond liked his martinis shake, not stirred; but I bet these guys were shaken *and* stirred.

 And as we read on in our text, we see that they were *right* to be as “all shook up” as Elvis, because all this business didn’t end well for them:

 **“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” (Acts 12:19).**

King Herod was the one who *put* Peter in that prison in the first place. But we know he didn’t intend to *leave* him there to rot in jail, for back in the first four verses of this chapter we saw that

**“Herod the king…*killed James*….And because he saw it pleased the Jews, he pro-ceeded...to take Peter…And…put him in prison…intending…*to bring him forth to the people”* (Acts 12:1-4).**

Herod planned to bring Peter forth to “the people” *of Israel.* Peter was imprisoned in Israel, and Herod planned to bring Peter forth to the *unsaved* Jews in Israel, and let them clamor for Peter’s death, the way they demanded the Lord’s death when Pilate offered to release Him or Barabbas.

 So when Herod “sought” for Peter, and found he flew the coop, he “examined” his jailkeepers. And Roman kings didn’t examine a man by sitting him down in a comfy interrogation room like you see on television. That *is* the only place you’ve seen one, right? Just checking!

 No, interrogations in Rome were more like the one they gave Paul in Acts 22:24, where

**“The chief captain commanded…that he should be examined *by scourging…”***

Now a “scourge” was kind of like a *whip.* But it wasn’t like the *bullwhip* we think of when we think of whips. It was more like the *pretend* whip the Lord used in John 2:13-15:

**“Jesus…found in the temple…the changers of money sitting: And when He had made a scourge *of small cords,* He drove them all out of the temple…”**

The Lord made a *pretend* scourge “of small cords.” It was a whip, but a whip with many strands. He wanted to drive the moneychangers out of the temple, but without hurting them, so He *imitated* the kind of scourge the Romans used. We read about the kind the Romans used in Mark 15:15:

**“Pilate…delivered Jesus, *when he had scourged Him,* to be crucified.”**

Pilate didn’t use a pretend scourge on the Lord; he used *the real McCoy.* History can’t be trusted, but history says that Roman scourges were long *leather* straps with jagged pieces of metal embedded in the ends of the straps. Those straps would bite into a man’s flesh and make a bloody mess of him.

That’s what they used on your Savior, and that’s what Herod ordered to be used on those soldiers, to try to find out how Peter escaped from right under their Roman noses. And when all he heard was, “We don’t know what happened!” he ordered that those 16 men be put to death.

Now Herod is a type of the antichrist here. When Antichrist appears, *he too* is going to try to please unsaved Jews by killing the followers of Jesus Christ, just like Herod killed James in this type. And knowing that Herod is a type of the beast helps explain what we read in the next verse of our text:

**“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” (Acts 12:20).**

Here we have to ask why Luke, who wrote the Book of Acts, included this story here. I mean, it doesn’t seem to have anything to do with Peter, or anything else that’s going on in this chapter. But when you read about people trying to stay on the good side of King Herod, it’s not hard to see how that would be a type of people trying to stay on the good side of the beast in the Tribulation. So lets’ talk about what the people of Tyre and Sidon did here.

First of all, we’re not told how they managed to tick Herod off, but whatever it was, they knew they couldn’t afford to stay on his bad side, for verse 20 says that their cities were “nourished” by Herod. You see, Herod was a *wealthy* king, the kind of king those unsaved Jews liked. The kind that makes him a perfect type of the antichrist. In Daniel 8:23-25, Daniel describes him as

**“a king of fierce countenance…shall stand up. And his power shall be mighty, but not by his own power: *and he…shall prosper*...and…destroy…the holy people…and he shall magnify himself in his heart, *and…he shall also stand up against the Prince of princes…”***

As you can see from that prophecy, Antichrist is going to be a *prosperous* man. And judging from what we can learn about him in the type that we’re seeing in Herod, he’s also a king who will prosper—or *nourish—*other people as well. That’s something that will make him *very* popular, and make them want to stay on his good side, as we’re seeing pictured here with the people of Tyre and Sidon.

 For their part, they tried to get back in the king’s good graces by buddying up to a man named Blastus, who is identified as Herod’s “chamberlain.” In the Bible, a chamberlain was evidently one of a king’s most trusted servants, judging by what we read in Esther 2:3, where it speaks of

**“Hege the king's chamberlain, *keeper of the women…”***

A king’s chamberlain was in charge of his harem of women, and what went on in their bedchambers. He needed someone trustworthy to make sure they didn’t engage in any hanky panky that didn’t involved him.

 History can’t be trusted to define Bible words, but when history adds that chamberlains were *also* in charge of a king’s *finances,* that would certainly make sense. A king would need someone trustworthy for that as well.

 And that’s why the people of Tyre and Sidon decided to get in bed with Blastus. They needed someone Herod trusted to put in a good word for them, so Herod would *continue* to nourish them with his riches. If you know anything about history, you know that that kind of backroom dealing has been going on down through the ages, and it’s not going to slow down just because the antichrist is sitting on the throne of the world.

 Recognizing that Herod is a type of Antichrist *also* helps explain why Luke would tell us about what happened in the next two verses of our text:

 **“And upon a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne, and made an oration unto them.**

 **“And the people gave a shout, saying, It is the voice of a god, and not of a man” (Acts 12:21,22).**

Now a speech made by a king that prompts people to think he is a god should make you think of what we know about the antichrist. Daniel says of him that

**“…the king…*shall exalt himself,* and magnify himself above every god, *and shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods…”* (Daniel 11:36).**

The way the beast is going to magnify himself is by saying *he’s* God. At least that’s what Paul told the Thessalonians when he wrote,

**“…that man of sin….*exalteth himself above all that is called God…*so that he as God *sitteth* in the temple of God, *shewing himself that he is God”* (II Thessalonians 2:3,4).**

Notice that Antichrist is *sitting* in the temple making his oration, just as Herod was sitting on his throne when he made *his* oration.

 And don’t forget how this chapter started. Satan got Herod to kill James, because James represented the voice *of God.* In speaking of the Lord Jesus, Mark says,

**“He ordained twelve…*and James…and John…*He surnamed...*sons of thunder”* (Mark 3:14,17).**

As we learned in a previous study, thunder is associated with the voice of God in many verses in Scripture, including this one:

**“The LORD *thundered* from heaven, and the most High *uttered His voice”* (II Samuel 22:14 cf. Job 37:5; 40:9; Psalm 18:13; 29:3; 77:18; 104:7).**

And James and John were about to *become* the voice of God, for they were about to write some books of the New Testament where God’s voice appears. When James died, God just used *another* man named James to wrote the New Testament epistle that bears his name.

But when Herod *silenced* the voice of God in the Apostle James here, and then pretended to *be* the voice of God, that’s a picture of how Antichrist will claim to be the voice of God, while telling people to forget all about how the New Testament says that *Jesus of Nazareth* is God.

Now I know that Acts 12:22 says that the *people* claimed Herod had the voice of God, and not Herod himself. But they were just saying what he was thinking. We know that because he’s a type of the Antichrist, and that’s what *he’ll* be thinking!

Herod was the king of the city of Tyre, right? Well, Antichrist is called the *prince* of Tyre in Ezekiel 28:2,4,5, where God instructs the prophet to

**“Say unto *the prince of Tyrus…*thine heart is lifted up, and *thou* hast said, *I am a God,* I sit in the seat of God…*yet thou art a man,* and not God, *though thou set thine heart as the heart of God*…thou hast gotten…gold and silver…by thy traffick hast thou *increased thy riches…”***

The beast is going to be a *man,* a man who is a *king,* but a king who think’s he’s *God* in his heart. And Herod is a type of him. So when *the people* said he had the voice of a god, they were just saying what he was thinking.

 Ezekiel also says that Antichrist will be a *wealthy* king, one who will make *others* wealthy as well, as we see pictured when Herod “nourished” Tyre and Sidon. He’ll be the kind of king people *like,* as the Lord predicted in John 5:43 when He said,

**“I am come in My Father's name, *and ye receive Me not:* if another shall come in his *own* name, *him ye will receive.”***

He was talking about the antichrist.

 One of the *reasons* people will like and receive him is due to his wealth. The Lord was a poor man, but the beast will be a rich man, like Herod. That’s the kind of king people like! They’ll like him so much that they’ll think he’s a god.

 But look what happened when a poor man claimed to be God:

 ***“the Jews took up stones again to stone Him.* Jesus answered…Many good works have I shewed you…for which of those works do ye stone Me? The Jews answered Him…For a good work we stone Thee not; but…*because that Thou, being a man, makest Thyself God”* (John 10:31-33).**

Those unsaved Jews wanted to *kill* a poor man for claiming to be God, because He wasn’t the kind of God they were looking for. But unsaved men will *receive* the beast, for he’ll be a prosperous man, and a great orator, like Herod. People will hear him and say, “It’s the voice of a god, and not a man!”

 But saved Jews won’t be hoodwinked by the voice of the antichrist. Do you remember what the Lord said in that chapter where He called Himself the Good Shepherd?

**“…the sheep hear His voice…and the sheep follow Him: *for they know His voice.* And a stranger will they *not* follow, but will flee from him: for they know *not* the voice of strangers …*I am the Good Shepherd,* and know My sheep, *and am known of Mine”* (John 10:3-5,14).**

Saved Jews are going to remember the voice of the Lord, and reject the voice of the beast. They’ll not have heard His voice audibly, but they’ll have the words of His voice recorded in the words of the New Testament. That will enable them to detect and *refuse* to hear the voice of the beast, or call him God, as the people did here with Herod.

 Well, now that Herod has given us a picture of how Antichrist will *live,* he has to picture how he’ll *die.* Acts 12:23 says,

 **“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.”**

Now first, when it says Herod “gave not God the glory,” that means he didn’t do what Peter did when somebody treated *him* like a god:

**“…as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, *and fell down at his feet, and worshipped him.* But Peter took him up, saying, *Stand up; I myself also am a man”* (Acts 10:25,26).**

Peter said, “Knock it off! I’m just a man like you!” But Herod must have just sat back and enjoyed the adulation of the masses, for some angel *smote* him, and he gave up the ghost. That’s a Bible figure of speech that means he *died,* as it did when Job was so miserable from all his afflictions that he wrote,

**“Why *died I* not from the womb? Why did I not *give up the ghost* when I came out of the belly?” (Job 3:11).**

But if Herod *wasn’t* a type of the antichrist, then what happened to him here in verse 23 seems a little out of sequence. I mean, usually you die and *then* you get eaten up of worms; the wormy *maggots* in the *grave.* Job described that dark scene when he wrote,

**“…another dieth….They shall lie down…in the dust, *and the worms shall cover them”* (Job 21:25,26).**

The “dust” there is the dust of the ground that you’ll be *buried* in if the Lord doesn’t come for you first. Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return. But Herod was eaten of worms, and *then* he died. That’s a picture of how *the beast* will meet his demise. Revelation 19:20 says that after the battle of Armageddon,

***“…the beast was taken,* and with him the false prophet….These both were cast *alive* into a lake of fire burning with brimstone”**

Antichrist doesn’t get the chance to die and get buried and get eaten by worms in the grave, and Herod is a type of that.

 But that doesn’t mean the beast will miss out on the worms! Look what happens to him after he dies and arrive sin hell. In speaking of him under one of his many Bible names, God told Isaiah to

**“…take up this proverb *against the king of Babylon*…How hath the oppressor ceased!...He who smote the people…*with a continual stroke,* he that ruled the nations in anger, is persecuted…*The whole earth is at rest,* and is quiet: they break forth into singing…*Hell from beneath is moved for thee to meet thee at thy coming:* it stirreth up the dead for thee…all the kings of the nations. All they shall speak and say unto thee, *Art thou also become weak as we? art thou become like unto us?* Thy pomp is brought down to the grave…*and the worms cover thee”* (Isaiah 14:4-11).**

But the worms that will cover the antichrist in hell are a special *kind* of maggot. Compare how the Lord spoke of

 **“…hell…*where their worm dieth not,* and the fire is not quenched” (Mark 9:43,44).**

He was talking about the worms of the unsaved *people* in hell, the essence of men that will never die, as Isaiah made clear when he wrote,

**“…they shall go forth, and look upon the carcases *of the men that have transgressed against Me:* for *their* worm shall not die, *neither shall their fire be quenched”* (Isaiah 66:24).**

In hell, the unceasing fires of hell reduce a man to the shape of a maggoty worm. That’s something you might want to share with people who tell you they want to go to hell, because that’s where their friends are. Have you ever heard anyone say that? Share those Scriptures with people who say that, and graciously explain that they won’t be able to *recognize* their friend sin hell, for all maggots look alike. If you’ve see one, you’ve seen them all.

 And when those maggoty kings in hell see that Antichrist has become weak like they are, they’re going to *pounce* on him and *cover* him, and beat the snot out of him, probably for all eternity. They’re going to make him wish he *hadn’t* oppressed them in life, as Isaiah referenced in Isaiah 14. They’re going to beat like the proverbial rented mule, and mercilessly so.

 I picture it like what happens when a football player falls on a loose ball, and then a bunch of *other* players fall on top of him and cover him in a big pile. Underneath that pile, player are *biting* one another, and gouging each other’s eyes in an effort to wrestle the ball away from the poor sap who has it.

 Now I know that verse 23 says Herod becomes word food “immediately” after he’s called a god, and Antichrist won’t be fed to the maggots until three and a half years *after* he declares himself God. But this type is only concerned with the first half of the Tribulation, when the beast will be busy making money, pleasing unsaved Jews, and in winning friends and influencing people, as they say. So the type just skips over what happens in the three and a half years *after* he declares himself God. That’s just how prophecy works, so that’s how the types often work as well.

 But from now on in the Book of Acts, God’s types are going to start picturing what God is doing *today,* in the dispensation of grace; starting with one we see in the last two verses of our text:

 **“But the word of God grew and multiplied.**

**“And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem, when they had fulfilled their ministry, and took with them John, whose surname was Mark” (Acts 12:24,25).**

Now here, Luke isn’t talking about just *any* word of God. He was talking about the word of God being preached by Saul, who later became known as *Paul.* The rest of the Book of Acts is concerned with *his* new ministry among the Gentiles.

But if you’ve forgotten what “ministry” he *fulfilled* here, look what it says at the end of the previous chapter in Acts 11:

**“…in these days came prophets….And…one of them…signified by the Spirit that there should be *great dearth throughout all the world:* which came to pass…Then the disciples… *determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea:* Which also they did, *and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul”* (Acts 11:27-30).**

*That’s* the ministry Paul fulfilled in Acts 12:25, the ministry of bringing that “relief” package to the Jewish saints in Judaea. “Relief” is what we used to call welfare in the United States.

And you may remember why the saints in Judaea *needed* that relief. They certainly didn’t need it at Pentecost, where

**“…they were all filled with the Holy Ghost…and…sold their possessions...and parted them to all men, as every man had need….*Neither was there any among them that lacked”* (Acts 2:4,45; 4:34).**

The Jewish saints in Jerusalem had it made in the shade!

 Christians sometimes try to live like that in Christian communes, and it never works out, because we’re not filled with the Spirit in the way that they were. That’s also why you can’t speak in tongues like they could at Pentecost either (Acts 2:4). And without that supernatural filling of the Holy Ghost, Christians who try to live like that today always end up as poor as Job’s turkey, as they say in the South, broke as the 10 commandments. And that’s pretty broke!

 And when God began to shut the kingdom program down, he took away that filling of the Spirit, and all those saints who didn’t lack for a thing became what Paul called,

**“the *poor* saints…at Jerusalem” (Romans 15:26).**

So Paul not only brought that relief package to Jerusalem, he went around taking up *more* collections from Gentiles as he went about in their cities preaching the gospel of the grace of God. And he tells us *why* when he outlined his next move to the Romans:

**“…now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints. For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem…*their debtors they are.* For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, *their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things”* (Romans 15:25-27).**

Once God started up His grace program for Gentiles, they became partakers of Israel’s spiritual things, so they *owed it* to those poor Jewish saints to minister to them in carnal things like money and food. It was a *debt;* a debt that Paul made sure they paid. And that’s just one of the connections between Israel’s program and ours.

 We see another one when Paul took John Mark with him as he and Barnabas left to go preach to the Gentiles. John was the man who wrote the Gospel of Mark. That makes him a Jewish kingdom saint like Barnabas. So when Mark helped Paul here, that’s a type of what God began to do with Paul’s new ministry among the Gentiles. Throughout the Book of Acts, God had Jews like John and Barnabas and Apollos and others help Paul with his new ministry among the Gentiles.

 Hey, if God were to leave you behind at the Rapture, wouldn’t you help the new Jewish kingdom saints get the kingdom gospel out? Don’t worry, God *won’t* leave you behind! But that’s what you’d do, and that’s what mark and Barnabas are doing here as well.

 In closing, look back at Acts 12:18 a moment:

 **“Now as soon as it was day, there was no small stir among the soldiers, what was become of Peter.”**

If you think about it, for the past 2,000 years there has been no small stir *in Christianity* about what happened to Peter. I say that because the Catholic church says Peter went to Rome and became the leader of “the church, which is His Body” (Eph.1:22,23), so we should build Christianity on Peter as they do. But Catholic *Bibles* say what every *other* version of the Bible says, that Peter *disappears* here in Acts 12, and only *reappears* in Acts 15 to endorse Paul! So build the church the way *Paul* says to build it, not Peter!

 Finally, may I ask you a personal question? Do you have a simple ministry like Paul had, perhaps one of bringing food to someone as he did, or some other ministry in carnal things like that? No matter what kind of ministry the Lord has given you, do what Paul said in Colossians 4:17:

**“Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, *that thou fulfil it.”***

 I have a dear friend who lives in Florida, and cuts his neighbors’ grass without charge, wearing a tee shirt that asks, “Do you believe the Lord Jesus Christ died for your sins and rose again?” Recently he told me he mowed *eight* lawns that day and didn’t charge them a nickel, just to show his neighbors the love of Christ. If you don’t have a ministry like that, or any kind of ministry at all, why not bow and pray about it, *right now.*

You’ll be eternally glad you did.