

## Fact Sheet for **“Hiding in Plain Sight”** **Acts 12:20-25**

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ESV <sup>20</sup> ¶ **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.**

Caesarea had an excellent manmade harbor. Tyre and Sidon were Phoenician seaport cities, but with harbors much smaller than Caesarea. Ancient Tyre was never rebuilt (Ezekiel 26:14) and never did regain its former importance. (Google Earth – majority of area occupied by biblical city, both on mainland and island, was never rebuilt. It is an archaeological site.) Sidon was further north on coast. Why was Herod angry with them? We don't really know. But both areas were dependent on Herod Agrippa I for their food.

<sup>21</sup> **On an appointed day Herod put on his royal robes, took his seat upon the throne, and delivered an oration to them. <sup>22</sup> And the people were shouting, "The voice of a god, and not of a man!"**

“oration” = “public address, speech”

Remember Herod's personality (from last week's sermon). He behaved as a Roman in Rome. He acted an observant Jew in Jerusalem. He executed James. He planned to execute Peter.

<sup>23</sup> **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.**

This is the truth that was hidden in plain sight. Remember when an angel of the Lord struck down 185,000 Assyrian soldiers (2 Kings 19:35; Is. 37:36). Have you ever wished when you read an account like this in the Bible that you could have witnessed the events first hand? There was someone else who wrote of these events outside of the bible. Josephus was an historian. Though not inerrant and infallible, he wrote the following account.

"Now when Agrippa had reigned three years over all Judea he came to the city Caesarea, which was formerly called Strato's Tower; and there he exhibited spectacles in honor of Caesar, for whose well-being he'd been informed that a certain festival was being celebrated. At this festival a great number were gathered together of the principal persons of dignity of his province. On the second day of the spectacles he put on a garment made wholly of silver, of a truly wonderful texture, and came into the theater early in the morning. There the silver of his garment, being illuminated by the fresh reflection of the sun's rays, shone out in a wonderful manner, and was so resplendent as to spread awe over those that looked intently upon him. Presently his flatterers cried out, one from one place, and another from another, (though not for his good) that he was 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." Upon this the king neither rebuked them nor rejected their impious flattery. But he shortly afterward looked up and saw an owl sitting on a certain rope over his head, and immediately understood that this bird was the messenger of ill tidings, just as it had once been the messenger of good tidings to him; and fell into the deepest sorrow. A severe pain arose in his belly, striking with a most violent

intensity. He therefore looked upon his friends, and said, "I, whom you call a god, am commanded presently to depart this life; while Providence thus reproves the lying words you just now said to me; and I, who was by you called immortal, am immediately to be hurried away by death. But I am bound to accept what Providence allots, as it pleases God; for we have by no means lived ill, but in a splendid and happy manner." When he had said this, his pain became violent. Accordingly he was carried into the palace, and the rumor went abroad everywhere that he would certainly die soon. The multitude sat in sackcloth, men, women and children, after the law of their country, and besought God for the king's recovery. All places were also full of mourning and lamentation. Now the king rested in a high chamber, and as he saw them below lying prostrate on the ground he could not keep himself from weeping. And when he had been quite worn out by the pain in his belly for five days, he departed this life, being in the fifty-fourth year of his age and in the seventh year of his reign."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>23</sup> **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.**

Herod *acted* the part of one who served the true God, though he was not saved, but he accepted praise as a god (not strange for a Roman king or emperor). And for this, God intervened and brought his life to a painful end. The crowd sought “god” for his recovery. But the true God had already decided and was directing these events in history. Herod held much power in his day, but it is God who directs events. Herod thought Christianity was a problem that he would soon put an end to. But God put an end to Herod and propelled the church forward. Consider what God said to the king of the ancient city of Tyre (Ezekiel 28:2-10).

<sup>24</sup> ¶ **But the word of God increased and multiplied.**

Consider Herod's power. He did not continue, but the word of God did (see Is. 55:10-11). This was the Lord's doing!

<sup>25</sup> **And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem when they had completed their service, bringing with them John, whose other name was Mark.**

This “service” was mentioned in Acts 11:27-30.

Remember the words of Solomon.

**ESV Proverbs 19:21** Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the LORD that will stand.

Don't let your faith be weakened by what is happening in Washington D.C., who gets elected, the downward moral trend of our culture, or the increasing criticism of Christians and the church. It is the purpose of the Lord that will stand! He will see history through. He will see us through.

Be encouraged!

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<sup>1</sup> Josephus, Antiquities 19.8.2 343-350.