

In Acts 12:21-23, the Bible tells a shocking story of divine judgment on a man who accepted glory that rightfully belonged to God:

“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.” (*Acts 12:21-23, ESV*)

This event is not just historical it carries theological weight and a solemn warning about pride, the danger of self-glorification, and God’s intolerance of idolatry, even in the form of human ego.

1. Herod’s Sin: Stealing God’s Glory

Herod Agrippa I was a politically powerful king, known for persecuting the early Church (Acts 12:1-3). When the people praised him as a god, Herod accepted the worship instead of redirecting the glory to God. This was the core of his sin.

Scripture is clear: God alone deserves glory.

“I am the Lord; that is my name; my glory I give to no other, nor my praise to carved idols.” (*Isaiah 42:8*)

Herod’s pride mirrors that of Satan, who sought to exalt himself above God (*Isaiah 14:13–14*). Pride is the root of many downfalls.

“Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.” (*Proverbs 16:18*)

By accepting divine honor, Herod positioned himself as a rival to God—an act of idolatry in the highest form.

2. Divine Judgment: Eaten by Worms

The phrase “*eaten by worms*” (Greek: σκωληκόβρωτος) likely refers to being consumed internally by parasitic worms, such as intestinal roundworms or maggots, which cause immense suffering and death.

This was not symbolic it was a physical affliction from God, a supernatural judgment.

Interestingly, the Jewish historian Josephus also recorded this event, stating Herod died in agony after five days of abdominal pain, further confirming the biblical account (Antiquities 19.8.2).

In biblical theology, such a judgment reflects God's holiness and justice. Just as God struck Ananias and Sapphira for lying to the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:1-10), He struck Herod for blasphemously accepting glory that belongs to Him alone.

3. A Pattern in Scripture: God Humbles the Proud

This was not the first time God humbled a ruler. King Nebuchadnezzar was also judged when he exalted himself:

"At the end of twelve months he was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon, and the king answered and said, 'Is not this great Babylon, which I have built by my mighty power...?' While the words were still in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven... Immediately the word was fulfilled..." (*Daniel*

4:29-33)

Nebuchadnezzar lost his mind and lived like an animal until he acknowledged God's sovereignty.

"Those who walk in pride he is able to humble." (*Daniel 4:37*)

4. A Warning for Today: Pride Still Kills

While we may not see such visible judgments today, the principle remains: God resists the proud.

"God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." (*James 4:6*)

Whether you are a leader, artist, preacher, or influencer, God expects you to acknowledge that your gifts and opportunities come from Him.

“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights...” (*James 1:17*)

The danger today is more subtle: people seek fame, followers, and admiration. But whenever we exalt ourselves without honoring God, we risk spiritual decay and even divine discipline.

5. Our Response: Give Glory to God Always

Whether in success, talent, wealth, or ministry, give credit to God.

“So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.” (*1 Corinthians 10:31*)

“Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.” (*Jeremiah 9:23-24*)

Let's remember: this world is not ours. It belongs to God. We are stewards of what He gives us not owners. Giving God glory protects us from pride and keeps us in right standing with Him.

Final Thoughts

Herod's story is a reminder that God takes His glory seriously. He is patient but not passive. As Isaiah declares,

"The Lord of hosts has purposed, and who will annul it? His hand is stretched out, and who will turn it back?" (*Isaiah 14:27*)

Let us walk humbly, live thankfully, and always return the glory where it belongs to God alone.

Shalom.

What Does It Mean That Herod Was Eaten by Worms? A Theological Reflection

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