LESSON 10

PETER'S ESCAPE FROM PRISON

Read Acts 12 & Study Note: The Herodian Family

LESSON QUESTIONS

1. Which of the original Apostles was the first to be martyred for his faith? Who had him put to death?

2. What was the church doing while Peter was being kept in prison? What is your first response when you have a friend in trouble?

3. Describe the security at the prison. What was Peter doing when an angel of the Lord appeared? What instructions did the angel give to Peter?

4. Where did Peter go when he “came to himself” (fully awoke)? Who answered the door? Why did Peter have to keep knocking? Have you ever had an unexpected answer to prayer? Did you “open the door” to that unexpected answer from the Lord?

5. **CHALLENGE QUESTION:** How many different Herods do we find in the New Testament? What are the common traits of each of these men? This “King” Herod had a gruesome death. What did he do that warranted such an end? What does God say about His glory in **Isaiah 42:8** and **48:11**?

Memory Verse - Luke 11:9-10

“So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.”

HEART APPLICATION QUESTIONS

6. When God doesn't answer a prayer the way you hoped, what is your natural response? What does that response reveal about what you believe to be true about God?

7. What is something in your life right now that is difficult to surrender to God's control? What would it look like to genuinely trust Him with it?

8. Are you living more like you're on a cruise ship or a battleship? Where might God be calling you to move beyond comfort and become more intentional about his purposes?

LESSON 10

STUDY NOTES

THE HERODIAN FAMILY

It may be that when you think of Herod, you immediately think of the King Herod who ordered the murder of the innocents in Bethlehem. **But, as you dig into the Herodian family history, you find that this entire family was filled with cruel, evil and murderous men.** Several of them were also called Herod.

Herod the Great is the one we read about in **Matthew 2** when the Magi came seeking the One who was born king. The thought of sharing his throne with anyone infuriated King Herod to the point that he put all of Jerusalem in an uproar. Rather than returning to Jerusalem and reporting back to Herod, God directed the Magi to return home another way. When Herod realized this, he gave orders to kill all of the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under.

There is very little to his credit except his great building projects. Although he was only half Jewish and half Idumean (descended from Esau), he oversaw the great expansion project of the Temple in Jerusalem which was even called Herod's Temple. He claimed to be a true worshiper but continued to take part in pagan religious rites.

One of his greatest characters flaws was that he was almost insanely suspicious. The older he became, the more suspicious he grew. If he suspected anyone as a rival to his power, that person was promptly eliminated. He murdered his wife Marianne and her mother Alexandra as well as his eldest son, Antimatter and two other sons.

As he came to the end of his life, he retired to Jericho and gave orders that a collection of the most distinguished citizens of Jerusalem should be arrested on trumped-up charges and imprisoned. He ordered that the moment he died, they should all be killed. He was aware that no one would mourn over his death, and he was determined that some tears be shed when he died.

Herod the Great goes down in history as the man who tried to kill the Christ child. Herod was afraid that this little child was going to interfere with his life, his power, his influence, and therefore, his first instinct was to destroy Him. There are still those today who have the same instinct. They don't want Christ to interfere in their lives, so they abuse, persecute, and even destroy those who belong to Him.

When Herod the Great died, the entire kingdom over which he had ruled was split up. In his will he left a part of his kingdom to three of his sons. He left Judea to Archelaus, Galilee to Herod Antipas, and the region to the northeast and beyond Jordan to Philip. Archelaus was a bad king, and he did not reign for long. He began his reign with an attempt to outdo his father with the deliberate slaughter of 3,000 of the most influential people in the country.

Even with the death of Herod the Great, with Archelaus on the throne, it was still unsafe for Joseph and his family to return to Judea, so God guided him to take his family to Nazareth in Galilee where Herod Antipas reigned.

Years later, Herod Antipas arrested John the Baptist and put him in prison because of what John had said about his marriage to his brother Philip's wife, Herodias. "Although he wanted to put him to death, he feared the people, because they held him to be a prophet" **(Matthew 14)**.

It is always dangerous to rebuke a tyrant and that is precisely what John did. Herod imprisoned John because he was a man who told the truth. Herod Antipas had seduced his brother's wife, Herodias, and persuaded her to leave his brother Philip and marry him. In order to do that, he had to put away his own wife. In doing so, Herod broke two laws, divorcing his own wife without cause and marrying his sister-in-law, which was a relationship prohibited under Jewish law. For this reason, John rebuked him.

By his rebuke John signed his own death warrant. Herodias nursed a grudge against John for confronting her with her sin. She finally got her opportunity to take vengeance on this man of God at Herod's birthday party. She was a woman who didn't hesitate to use her own daughter for her own vindictive purposes. Herod kept an oath but broke a great law, condemning an innocent man.

In Luke's gospel, we read of Jesus' trial before this same Herod, Herod Antipas. As Jesus stood trial before this weak and sinful man, He refused to give an answer. Herod had been given ample opportunity to hear the truth from John, and when someone continually refuses to listen to God's truth, eventually there is only silence.

In **Acts 12**, we find yet another Herod reigning as king, Herod Agrippa I. He was the grandson of Herod the Great. The apostle Paul would one day stand trial before his son, Herod Agrippa II.

Agrippa thought that the way to win favor with the Jews in power was to persecute the hated Christians. He put Peter in prison and had James, the brother of John, put to death with a sword. Herod Agrippa's gruesome death is recorded at the end of **Acts 12**. He died because he failed to give glory to God. This is a strong warning for all of us.

LESSON 10: MESSAGE NOTES

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PRAISES & PRAYER REQUESTS