

THE BOOK OF ACTS | GOD'S REVELATION OF TRANSITION

SESSION 39 | ACTS 12:18-3:8

ACTS 12:18-23 | HEROD'S FINAL DAYS

- Verse 18 –
 - This gives evidence that the soldiers were put into some kind of trance or stupor when the angel came.
- Verse 19 –
 - Herod the king had unbending authority and was able to single-handedly sentence the guards to death for this breach of conduct.
 - In all likelihood, the men died. This scenario partly raises an ethical problem on God's end (couldn't He have done this without collateral damage?), but also on the end of the Roman Government (is judgment without rebuttal ethical?).
- Verses 20-21 –
 - These verses are staging for the death of Herod in the following verses.
- Verses 22-23 –
 - It is possible that God was upset with Herod for his lack of justice in having the guards killed. When Herod accepted the glory which belongs to God alone, God would put up with him no longer.
 - The death was so monumental that Josephus the historian writes about it: "On the second day of which shows he put on a garment made wholly of silver, and of a contexture truly wonderful, and came into the theatre early in the morning; at which time the silver of his garment being illuminated by the fresh reflection of the sun's rays upon it, shone out after a surprising manner, and was so resplendent as to spread a horror over those that looked intently upon him; (345) and 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." (346) Upon this the king did neither rebuke them, nor reject their impious flattery. But, as he presently afterwards looked up, he saw an owl sitting on a certain rope over his head, and immediately understood that this bird was the messenger of ill tidings, as it had once been the messenger of good tidings to him; and fell into the deepest sorrow. A severe pain also arose in his belly, and began in a most violent manner. (347) 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 of what Providence allots as it pleases God; for we have by no means lived ill, but in a splendid and happy manner." (348) When he said this, his pain was become violent. Accordingly he was carried into the palace; and the rumor went abroad everywhere, that he would certainly die in a little time (Josephus: *Antiquities of the Jews*, 19:344-348).

ACTS 12:24-25 | SHIFTING TO SAUL

- Verse 24 –
 - At this point, there is still nothing about **the word of God** that is new or "mystery." Rather, we continue with the John the Baptist / Apostolic kingdom message.

- Verse 25 –
 - The last we saw Barnabus and Saul, they were in Jerusalem (see Acts 11:25-30).
 - Now they return **from Jerusalem** to Antioch **when they had fulfilled *their* ministry** of delivering the offering to the saints, and John Mark (from verse 12) accompanied them.

ACTS 13:1-12 | SAUL'S FINAL APPEARANCE (BEFORE BECOMING PAUL)

- Verse 1 –
 - The Antioch church was a Jewish assembly in a prophetic age, with five prophets being mentioned here. We are familiar with only Barnabus and Saul.
- Verse 2 –
 - The Greek word **ministered** is a purely religious word, unlike the common *diakonon*, this is *leitourgeō* [leitourgeo] from which we get *liturgy*.
 - During this *ministry of worship*, the **Holy Ghost said**, in a presumably audible voice, that Barnabus and Saul were to be separated.
 - The verb **separate** is *ἀφορίζω* [aphorizo] is not *sanctify* (*ἀγιάζω* / *hagiazō*) but a more mundane word with a literal meaning, “away from the horizon.”
 - We should note that this kind of *call* was atypical even in that prophetic day. We do not need an ecstatic experience today to be “called” into ministry. All we need is for a church to be willing to **separate** us for a work to which *the church* has called them.
- Verses 3-5 -
 - Paul and Barnabus, along with John Mark (v. 5) left Antioch (near modern day Aleppo) and went to the coastal city of Seleucia to the island of Cyprus where they disembarked at the port city of Salamis.
 - In Salamis **they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews**. Presumably this is still the Apostolic word (i.e.: the Gospel of the Kingdom).
- Verses 6-8 –
 - The city of **Paphos** on the western end of the Island was the capital city. The entire island was under the direct control of the Roman senate (unlike Syria and Judah, which were imperial provinces with a local king).
 - Here a **sorcerer, a false prophet** (two marks against him) named **Bar-jesus** was **with the deputy of the country**. We are not given insight to the meaning of “with.”
 - The **deputy** was the *proconsul*, a man named **Sergius Paulus, a prudent man**. The name and title have been found inscribed on several stones from buildings on Cyprus, verifying the historic account of Luke. The word **prudent** is *συνετός* [synetos], a compound word meaning “to send together.” The word, when used with concepts, meant *the ability to connect ideas together to make a complete picture*.
 - While Sergius Paulus **desired to hear the word of God**, the sorcerer, **Elymas** would not allow Paul and Barnabus to speak.
 - Luke tells us that the name was Elymas **by interpretation** (*μεθερμηνεύω* - *methermeneuo*, “to change the hermeneutics / meaning”). That is, Elymas was a foreign name.
 - The Persian word *ulema* is the plural word meaning “the gathering of the Mullah’s.” A Mullah is the one who interprets Muslim law. Since Elymas predated Islam by almost 600 years, the word was likely in reference to a servant of a Persian deity.