

Acts 12b

12:19 – 13:3

19 The Code of Justinian required guards to receive the sentence of any prisoner that escaped their custody. This shows that Herod was definitely planning to execute Peter.

20 There is no historical account other than this passage. It had to do with food supplies and there are historical records of other such conflicts. We already learned that the region had problems with food supplies as was mentioned in 11:28. They depended on the region of Galilee for agriculture. Solomon had supplied the king of Tyre with wheat and oil a thousand years earlier. 1Kings 5:9-12

21-23 Josephus wrote a much more detailed account of this event. He stated that Herod was wearing an unusual robe of silver as he came into the amphitheater. The morning sun shone off the robe causing it to gleam as if he had an aura about him. Herod's plan worked. The crowd declared him to be a god. If the Caesars were gods, and if the gods often took the form of men, it was not unusual for them to come to that conclusion.

It is interesting that hundreds of years prior to this event, the king of Tyre considered himself a god. Ezekiel 28:2,6-8 Many interpret this to have a deeper reference to Satan's fall from heaven.

Josephus wrote that Herod suffered for five days after the speech until he died in agony. An angel afflicted him (immediately), which was the judgment of God for opposing the work of God and for having the nerve to allow himself to be called a god. He was guilty because he knew the law of God. He surely knew the signs in the Temple each day since Jesus died. God held him accountable because he knew better. Josephus put his death at three years after the ascension of Claudius which puts it at 44 A.D.

24 The king of Palestine killed James and planned to kill Peter. The Sanhedrin was trying to remove all Christians from Jerusalem. They were experiencing a famine, but the Word of God continued to increase and spread. We often think that the church is doing well when we are carefree and without problems, but problems strengthen us and weed out the tares. James 1:2-4

25 Barnabas and Saul had finished their relief mission and now headed back to Antioch with John Mark in tow.

13:1 Luke describes the five leaders of the church in Antioch by their gifts rather than their office, elders. (11:30) He could have used the term overseers. (20:28) From the description of the revival there, it must have been a fairly large church. These five men were leading the church because of their gifting to do so. We don't have a record of how they were selected or even if there was a selection process or not. It is a great example of church government, however, because we see the men held the office because of their gifts.

It is also an example to us of unity in diversity. Two were from northern Africa, one from Cyprus, one from Cilicia, and only one from Palestine. None of them were locals or even Syrian. Simeon was called Niger, Latin for black, probably because his skin color was much darker than the others. Lucius was from Cyrene and possibly a relative of Saul. Romans 16:21 Manaen was of high social status, a foster brother of Herod Antipus. He may have heard Jesus speak in Galilee and could have been a source of information for Luke. It was a multicultural, ethnically and socially diverse leadership team.

2 This is how the early church was led. The elders worshipped together, fasting and praying, and listened for the voice of the Holy Spirit. The passage does not say if the Holy Spirit spoke in a still small voice, or a prophetic word, but we know they knew He had spoken. It is important for us today to note that they didn't have a board meeting on evangelism. They weren't following Jerusalem's latest book on How to Advance the Kingdom. They worshipped and listened. Fasting was in Scripture an effort to hear God's direction. Luke 2:37; Nehemiah 1:4 To set apart – Romans 10:15; Acts 9:15

3 After that time of fasting and praying they laid hands on them: Laying on of hands in the Old Testament was for several different purposes. One was the transferring of sins to the sacrifice. These men are going out as living sacrifices. Another, the conferral of blessing (Genesis 48:18) as with Jacob and his sons. Also it could mean a transfer of authority as when Moses laid hands on Joshua. (Numbers 27:18-23) In this account in Acts, it is a conferral of authority and blessing for the work God has called them to do. They obeyed immediately what the Holy Spirit directed them to do.