

A CAUTIONARY TALE

And immediately an angel of the Lord struck him because he did not give God the glory, and he was eaten by worms and died.

Acts 12:23

THE FIRST-CENTURY HISTORIAN Flavius Josephus fleshes out the scene for us:

After the completion of the third year of his reign over the whole of Judea, Agrippa came to the city of Caesarea... [where] he celebrated spectacles in honor of Caesar. On the second day of the spectacles, clad in a garment woven completely of silver so that its texture was indeed wondrous, he entered the theatre at daybreak. There the silver, illumined by the touch of the first rays of the sun, was wondrously radiant and by its glitter inspired fear and awe in those who gazed intently upon it.

Thus spectacularly adorned, Herod rose and began addressing the crowd. As Luke records, those present, out of true adoration (or judicious flattery), cried out, “The voice of a god and not of a man!” Josephus adds that

the king did not rebuke them nor did he reject their flattery as impious.

Luke gives us the Lord God’s response to this.

And immediately an angel of the Lord struck him because he did not give God the glory, and he was eaten by worms and died.

Acts 12:23

The modern reader might be forgiven for questioning the order of the Lord’s retribution. As Shakespeare so eloquently writes, are we not “made worms’ meat”

after we die? But, as always, God’s word is correct, and describes a rather gruesome consequence of Herod’s arrogance. This probably refers to intestinal roundworms, which can reach a length of ten to sixteen inches and feed on the nutrient fluids in the intestines. Bunches of these worms obstruct the intestines, resulting in severe pain, copious vomiting (of worms) and, ultimately, death.



Compare this sad spectacle to a similar occasion in Lystra during the ministry of the apostle Paul, when he healed a lame man.

When the crowds saw what Paul had done, they raised their voice, saying in the Lycaonian language, “The gods have become like men and have come down to us.”

Acts 14:11

In contrast to Herod Agrippa, however, Paul and his companion Barnabas immediately, frantically tried to dissuade the people.

But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of it, they tore their robes and rushed out into the crowd, crying out and saying, “Men, why are you doing these things? We are also men of the same nature as you, and preach the gospel to you that you should turn from these vain things to a living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them.”

Acts 14:14-15



There are certain words that have become, over time, the standard nomenclature of the church, and one of those is the word “glory.”

“Give God the glory.”

“Glory to His name.”

“We give Him glory.”

Far too often our use of this word is by rote, and unserious. The swift and sure judgment against Agrippa is proof that the Lord takes His glory quite seriously, and the lesson for every believer is that from our heart we must ascribe all glory to Him.

**“I am the Lord, that is My name;
I will not give My glory to another,
Nor My praise to graven images.”**

Isaiah 42:8

When we get puffed up, believing our own press releases; when we gladly accept the praise of people without redirecting it upward; when we exchange our humility for the shiny glad rags of pride—when we forget that the Lord God is a jealous God who does not share His glory, then we should tremble with fear before His potential wrath.

The Lord may not consign a Christian to the bowels of hell for stealing the glory due Him. But He may remove that believer from the face of the earth, because in his persistent self-glorification he has betrayed the true condition of his heart.

