

## Acts 9–12: Christ's kingdom extends to gentiles

Any questions from the first eight chapters before we continue?

### Acts 9: Saul meets the resurrected Lord

#### **An enemy meets God's Anointed (9:1-19)**

Saul was in the crowd that stoned Stephen (7:58), *approving of their killing him* (8:1).

To Saul, this Jesus cult was a threat to Judaism, undermining Jewish tradition that had survived through centuries of struggle. Their identity went all the way back to the Law and the Prophets. That's why Saul was zealous to eliminate this threat:

#### Acts 9:1-2 (NIV)

<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest <sup>2</sup> and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem.

Saul operated with the temple's authority. He was pursuing Jews who'd fled the country because of the pressure on these Jesus-followers (8:1). Saul had the paperwork to get them extradited back to Jerusalem to face the authorities.

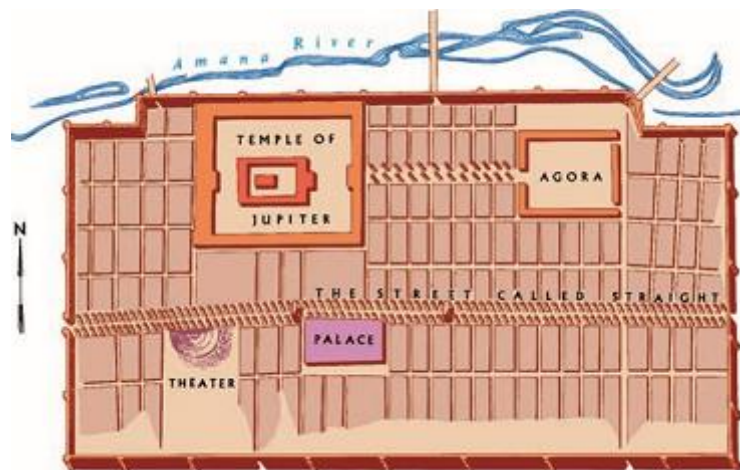
On the road, in gentile territory, Saul faced an authority he did not anticipate:

**Acts 9** <sup>3</sup> As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. <sup>4</sup> He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?"

Jesus is still suffering? In heaven? Did you ever consider how our Lord still participates in our sufferings?

*Persecute* (*diōkō*) can have another sense as well. It can mean to hound someone, to harass them, or chase them. Jesus asks, "Why are you *pursuing* me?"

**Acts 9** <sup>5</sup> "Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked. "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied. <sup>6</sup> "Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."



"Damascus in the time of Saul," *Understanding the New Testament: An Introductory Atlas*, (Carta Jerusalem, 2019), 32.

This is too much for Saul to process. As far as he knew, Jesus was dead, crucified by the very people whose authority Saul represents. If Jesus is speaking to him then Jesus is alive, raised up by God as Messiah (anointed ruler).

Saul is discovering Jesus' authority in Syria. Jesus' reign extends to the nations. And Saul is his enemy, aligned with the temple authorities who arranged Jesus' execution.

A few moments ago, Saul was so sure of himself he would imprison any who saw things differently. Now he's seen Jesus' authority, and he can see nothing else:

**Acts 9** <sup>7</sup> The men traveling with Saul stood there speechless; they heard the sound but did not see anyone. <sup>8</sup> Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing. So they led him by the hand into Damascus. <sup>9</sup> For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything.

The believers in Damascus knew Saul was coming. Maybe some left town. No one wanted Saul to find them.

### **Acts 9:10–19 (NIV)**

<sup>10</sup> In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias.

The Lord called to him in a vision, "Ananias!"

"Yes, Lord," he answered.

<sup>11</sup> The Lord told him, "Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying.

<sup>12</sup> In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight."

<sup>13</sup> "Lord," Ananias answered, "I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to your holy people in Jerusalem.

<sup>14</sup> And he has come here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on your name."

Jesus could have told Paul what to do. Instead, he involves Ananias. Between Saul and Ananias there is hatred and fear. The gospel (the good news that Jesus is king) reconciles us with God **and** with each other. The gospel is never a private decision—"just between you and God." The gospel calls for a world-transforming commitment to our God-appointed king.

The Lord insists Ananias deliver this prophetic message:

### **Acts 9:15-16 (my translation)**

<sup>15</sup> The Master said to him, "Go! for to me this one is a chosen carrier to bear [the authority entrusted to] my name before both the nations with their kings and Israel's descendants. <sup>16</sup> For I will show him how much he must suffer for my name."

This is different. Previously, Jesus appointed twelve to proclaim heaven's reign arriving in him, but he restricted them to *the decimated sheep of Israel's household*. The nations had overpowered God's nation, scattering Israel among the nations as sheep without a leader (Matthew 9:35–10:7).

Now God has raised up his Christ (anointed leader) over Israel and the nations. King Jesus commissions Saul to bear the authority entrusted to his name. The trouble is that the *nations* already have self-appointed *kings*. If Saul proclaims Jesus as our heaven-appointed ruler, he will suffer the same way Jesus did (Acts 17:7).

It takes time for Saul to digest the commission his Lord gave him through Ananias, but Saul does become the emissary of King Jesus to the nations. That's how he describes himself: *apostle to the gentiles* (Romans 11:13; Galatians 2:8; 1 Timothy 2:7).

Israel is included, of course. Jesus is God's anointed Messiah for Israel and the nations. For centuries, Jews had wondered how God would get the nations under control in order to restore his nation. The concept of the nations being included in the Messiah's reign was a *mystery* that had eluded everyone (Ephesians 3:6). That's the message King Jesus now entrusted to Saul. This is how God saves the world.

The chapter began with Saul *breathing out death threats* against the followers of the God-appointed ruler (9:1). Now King Jesus' most vocal opponent has seen him alive, raised up and enthroned by God. This revelation transforms Saul from enemy to ambassador. The one who caused such suffering for the Lord now participates in the suffering of his Lord: *there was a conspiracy among the Jews to kill him* (verse 23).

Saul becomes the apostle Paul. The enemy who breathed death threats against Christ's people writes these words to describe how the Christ will save the world:

**1 Corinthians 15:25-26 (my translation)**

It is necessary for him to be king until all his enemies have been placed under his feet, and the last enemy to be abolished is death.

***The community of the king (9:20-43)***

Saul joins the Damascus disciples, *proclaiming in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God* (verse 20). There's another attempt on his life (verse 24).

The Jerusalem disciples don't trust him, until Barnabas sides with Saul (verse 27).

After a third attempt on his life, they send him back home to Tarsus (verses 29-30).

Now that King Jesus has dealt with their most vociferous opponent, life is easier for the community under his leadership:

**Acts 9:31 (NIV)**

<sup>31</sup> Then the church [*ekklesia*] throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace and was strengthened. Living in the fear of the Lord and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it increased in numbers.

When the *ekklesia* was first established in Jerusalem, the Holy Spirit led them to *sell property and possessions to give to anyone in need* (2:45), so *there were no needy persons among them* (4:34). Now this is happening right across the *ekklesia* under Jesus' leadership. This example is from the port of Joppa (Tel Aviv-Yafo today):

**Acts 9:36 (NIV)**

In Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (in Greek her name is Dorcas); she was always doing good and helping the poor.

The community embodies Christ's leadership by caring for those who are unable to take care of themselves (the poor). Tabitha Dorcas is such an example of what it means to be a human that they Peter to come and see the impact of her life when she dies. Peter prays, and God restores her to life (verse 40).

That's how Peter came to be in Joppa (9:43) when an army officer from Caesarea summoned him (10:1).

Any thoughts on Acts 9? What strikes you about Saul's encounter with his king?

## Acts 10: Gentiles receive the Holy Spirit

### What God calls clean (10:1-23)

Peter's praying while waiting for lunch. He sees a vision:

#### Acts 10:11–16 (NIV)

<sup>11</sup> He saw heaven opened and something like a large sheet being let down to earth by its four corners. <sup>12</sup> It contained all kinds of four-footed animals, as well as reptiles and birds. <sup>13</sup> Then a voice told him, "Get up, Peter. Kill and eat."

<sup>14</sup> "Surely not, Lord!" Peter replied. "I have never eaten anything impure or unclean."

<sup>15</sup> The voice spoke to him a second time, "Do not call anything impure that God has made clean."

<sup>16</sup> This happened three times, and immediately the sheet was taken back to heaven.

It's hard to overstate how strange this was for Peter. The distinctives that separated Israel from the nations were their ethnicity, circumcision, observance of the Sabbath and festivals, and the kosher food laws. When a foreign ruler tried to force the Jews to drop these practices and sacrificed a pig in the temple, he caused a riot (160s BC). Peter would never eat food that violated Torah laws.

In fact, Peter would have been thoroughly confused that God had unclean creatures in heaven. Why would heaven be invaded by unclean animals and reptiles? Was this Peter's hunger pains talking, or was God really telling him to eat what was unclean? You can hear the confusion in his answer: "Certainly not, Lord!"

Peter is still trying to figure out what this means when soldiers turn up at the gate. It was never a good day when Roman soldiers came looking for you. These guys are from the Italian Guard, protecting the coastline. They've been sent to escort Peter to Caesarea to answer questions. Should he escape while he can?

The Spirit who had just confused Peter with that vision now tells him, "*Get up. Go downstairs. Don't hesitate to go with them, for I have sent them*" (verse 20).

Peter faces his inquisitors. They tell him their boss is a Roman army officer named



*Carta's New Century Handbook and Atlas of the Bible* (2015), 240.

Cornelius. He submits to Israel's God, and he had a visit from an angel telling him to ask for Peter in Joppa (verse 22, as in verses 1-8).

Normally, Peter would be very reticent to enter a gentile's house or accept his hospitality. But God just told Peter three times, "Do not call anything unclean that God has made clean" (verse 15).

**The gospel according to Peter (10:24-43)**

Peter goes (verse 23). It's so out of character he needs to explain himself:

**Acts 10:28–29 (NIV)**

<sup>28</sup> He said to them: "You are well aware that it is against our law for a Jew to associate with or visit a Gentile. But God has shown me that I should not call anyone impure or unclean. <sup>29</sup> So when I was sent for, I came without raising any objection. May I ask why you sent for me?"

Cornelius appeals to the highest authority: a message from an angel (verse 30).

So Peter needs to summarize the message of Jesus for someone without a Jewish background. Peter's Holy Spirit inspired message for Jews was outstanding (2:14-38), but his gospel presentation here is even better for a wider audience:

**Acts 10:36–43 (NIV)**

<sup>36</sup> "You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, announcing the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all. <sup>37</sup> You know what has happened throughout the province of Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached—<sup>38</sup> how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him.

<sup>39</sup> "We are witnesses of everything he did in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They killed him by hanging him on a cross, <sup>40</sup> but God raised him from the dead on the third day and caused him to be seen.

<sup>41</sup> He was not seen by all the people, but by witnesses whom God had already chosen—by us who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. <sup>42</sup> He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead. <sup>43</sup> All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."

Is this how you understand the gospel message? What did Peter say?  
Would you present the gospel in Australia like this? What would be the same?  
What would be different?

.....  
.....  
.....

## ***Can gentiles be a temple for the Holy Spirit? (10:44-48)***

Peter was still talking when God stepped in and changed everything. *Holy Spirit had been poured out even on gentiles*. It's like Pentecost all over again, but this time it's non-Jewish believers who are proclaiming what God has done in Christ in languages they had never learned (verse 46).

For Peter's companions, this was incongruous. Peter should never have gone into the home of a gentile, and Holy Spirit certainly should not have made his home in them.

Only circumcised males were accepted into the covenant family (Genesis 17:9-14). Uncircumcised, unclean gentiles were not fit receptacles for God's Holy Spirit (v. 45). Peter now understood his vision: "Do not call anything impure that God has made clean" (verse 15). Baptism is the only cleansing ceremony they need (verse 48).

These Roman soldiers are not becoming part of the Sinai covenant. They're not asked to be circumcised as if they were becoming Jews. They are part of the new covenant established when God raised up his anointed, giving him authority over all nations. They're asked to identify with the death, burial, and resurrection of their king.

What God has made clean, the Jewish community cannot treat as impure. God solved the problem of the nations crushing God's nation by including the nations in the kingdom of the Messiah:

### **Ephesians 2:19-22 (my translation)**

<sup>19</sup> You non-Jews are no longer foreigners and aliens but equal citizens, included in the holy people, with a place in God's households ...  
<sup>22</sup> co-assembled into God's dwelling-place by the Spirit.

## **Acts 11: Antioch: the first "Christians"**

### ***Reaction in Jerusalem (11:1-18)***

When Peter returned to Jerusalem, the Jewish believers censured him: "*You went into the house of uncircumcised men and ate with them*" (11:3).

In Jewish tradition, it was more honourable to die than eat with gentiles. This story from around 160 BC is in the Apocrypha (the extra books in the Catholic Bible):

### **2 Maccabees 6:18-20 (English Standard Version—Catholic Edition)**

<sup>18</sup> Eleazar, one of the scribes in high position, a man now advanced in age and of noble presence, was being forced to open his mouth to eat swine's flesh. <sup>19</sup> But he, welcoming death with honour rather than life with pollution, went up to the rack of his own accord, spitting out the flesh, <sup>20</sup> as men ought to go who have the courage to refuse things that it is not right to taste, even for the natural love of life.

Peter recounts the story, focusing on the revelation God gave him: "*Do not call anything impure that God has made clean*" (verse 9)

God made these gentiles the dwelling place for his Holy Spirit, so: "*Who was I to think that I could stand in God's way?*" (verse 17).



The Jerusalem believers begin to realize that God has changed the markers that identify his people:

**Acts 11:18 (NIV)**

<sup>18</sup> When they heard this, they had no further objections and praised God, saying, "So then, even to Gentiles God has granted repentance that leads to life."

The Jew/gentile problem is so deep-rooted that it continued to raise its head. We'll see more of this in Acts 15 and Paul's letters (Galatians; Romans 9–11).

It's still an issue in some quarters today. In the early days, Jews like Saul used their power to harm Christ-followers. When Christians gained power (the so-called Holy Roman Empire), they sometimes hated Jews as "Christ-killers." That attitude persisted into modern times when a "Christian" nation (Germany) tried to exterminate Jews.

So, how should Christians regard Jews? Are Jews "godless" and "enemies" as Martin Luther labelled them in his lectures on the Psalms? Or are the Jews God's chosen people, more precious and significant than other nations? How do we take the right attitude?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

**Christians beyond Jerusalem (11:19-30)**

While doing life with gentiles was a big deal for Jerusalem Jews, it was less of an issue for diaspora Jews (those scattered among the nations). They lived in gentile communities, rubbing shoulders with them every day. They couldn't help talking about Jesus with their neighbours:

**Acts 11:19–21 (NIV)**

<sup>19</sup> Now those who had been scattered by the persecution that broke out when Stephen was killed travelled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, spreading the word only among Jews.

<sup>20</sup> Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to **Antioch** and began to speak to **Greeks** also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus. <sup>21</sup> The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord.



Standard Bible Atlas. (2006) 33.

Antioch in northern Syria therefore becomes a hub for Christianity in the gentile world. Jerusalem responds by sending **Barnabas** the encourager (4:36), the guy who accepted Saul and introduced him to the Jerusalem church (9:27).

Remember, they'd sent **Saul** home to Tarsus for his own safety (9:30). Barnabas chases him up (11:25). Together, they taught *a great number of people* (verse 26).

Up to this point, the followers of Jesus have been regarded as an untrustworthy sect of Judaism, a “way” that doesn’t match what others of their faith are doing (9:2). In this Syrian city they get a new name: **Christians** (11:26). They’re not just Jews. They’re identifiable as the people who are always on about the anointed ruler, the Christ.

So this is how King Jesus brings heaven’s reign back to the earth. Jesus’ vision was: “*You will be the evidence of my expanding reign: in the capital, in Judea and Samaria (both parts of the fallen kingdom), and to the ends of the earth.*” (1:8 paraphrased).

There’s no Jewish kingdom and gentile kingdom. Together, Jews and gentiles live in the Messiah’s reign, as one family under God.

One of them (Agabus) hears from God about *a severe famine that would spread over the entire Roman world ... during the reign of Claudius [AD 41–54]* (verse 28). The kingdom of the Christ has an opportunity to provide support for and express family solidarity with their Jewish roots:

**Acts 11:29 (NIV)**

<sup>29</sup> The disciples, as each one was able, decided to provide help for the brothers and sisters living in Judea.

How important do you think it is to the “Christian” message for us to engage in practical support and solidarity with people who are struggling? Central, or incidental?

.....  
.....  
.....

**Acts 12: Herod’s death**

**Who is king now? (12:1-5)**

For the first eleven chapters of Acts, persecution came from the Jerusalem temple. It reacted to claims that the resurrected Jesus was king. But now the faith has spread to Antioch and beyond. The Roman rulers begin to treat Jesus as a threat.

Rulers do whatever it takes to remain popular with the people. That’s how democracy works, but it’s true of other forms of rule too:

**Acts 12:1–3 (NIV)**

<sup>1</sup> It was about this time that King Herod arrested some who belonged to the church, intending to persecute them. <sup>2</sup> He had James, the brother of John, put to death with the sword. <sup>3</sup> When he saw that this met with approval among the Jews, he proceeded to seize Peter also. This happened during the Festival of Unleavened Bread.

Four fishermen were among those Jesus chose as apostles: Peter and Andrew, James and John. James is the first to be put to death by the state. It must have brought back memories for Peter to be captured at Passover time, like his Lord.



Every once in a while I see a social media post promising, "God saved Daniel from the lions, and he will save your family from everything that comes against you." Anyone who says that does not understand the cross. Jesus was crucified, and he told them to expect the same treatment: "Take up your cross and follow me." Nearly all the apostles died for their Lord over the next 40 years.

How do you process what happened to James, the sufferings Christians face?

.....  
.....

**Who saves from oppression? (12:6-17)**

We can't expect the world to treat us better than it treated our Lord, but we do have the privilege of calling on a higher authority:

**Acts 12:5-11 (NIV)**

<sup>5</sup> So Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for him. <sup>6</sup> The night before Herod was to bring him to trial, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and sentries stood guard at the entrance. <sup>7</sup> Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared and a light shone in the cell. He struck Peter on the side and woke him up. "Quick, get up!" he said, and the chains fell off Peter's wrists.

<sup>8</sup> Then the angel said to him, "Put on your clothes and sandals." And Peter did so. "Wrap your cloak around you and follow me," the angel told him. <sup>9</sup> Peter followed him out of the prison, but he had no idea that what the angel was doing was really happening; he thought he was seeing a vision. <sup>10</sup> They passed the first and second guards and came to the iron gate leading to the city. It opened for them by itself, and they went through it. When they had walked the length of one street, suddenly the angel left him.

<sup>11</sup> Then Peter came to himself and said, "Now I know without a doubt that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from Herod's clutches and from everything the Jewish people were hoping would happen."

I love how Peter was so sleepy that the heavenly messenger had to spell out every step of the process. Peter believes he's still asleep ... until he finds himself standing alone outside Herod's prison and has to figure out where to go.

Why did God rescue Peter, but not James? Have you ever wondered why some prayers are answered and others are not? What do you do with that?

.....  
.....  
.....

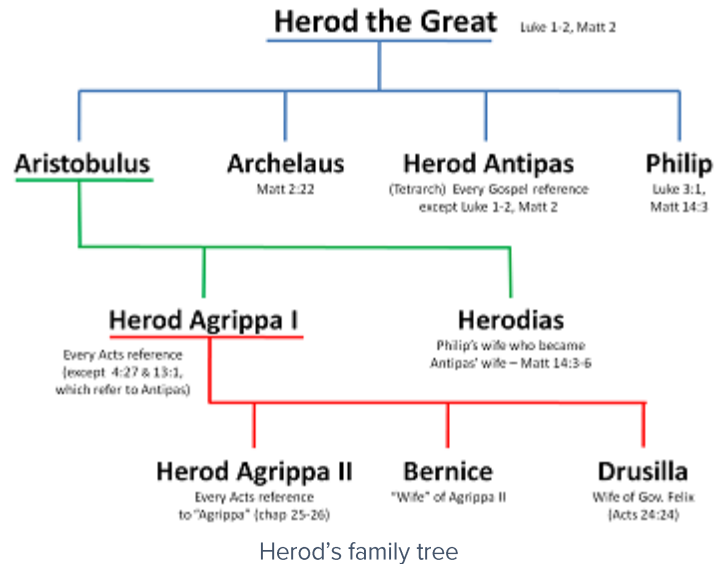
Peter joins the group that's been praying for him (verses 12-17).

Can you guess what happened to the guards who lost their prisoner? (verses 18-19).

## Whose reign lasts? (12:18-25)

The *King Herod* of Acts 12:1 is Herod Agrippa I, grandson of Herod the Great who killed the babies of Bethlehem to eliminate “the king of the Jews” (Matthew 2). Now God has given dominion of the earth to King Jesus, but Herod Agrippa is killing and imprisoning those who proclaim Jesus reign in order to protect his power.

This is the rebellion that has dominated human history since in the beginning. God made us in his image, giving us dominion over his creation (Genesis 1:26-28). We rebelled, trying to take *the knowledge of good and evil* for ourselves to be *like gods* (Genesis 3:5). Instead, rebellion made us mortal (Genesis 3:19), and we wield the power of death (Genesis 4:8). We hunt for power, as Babylon and Assyria did to Israel in Old Testament times (Genesis 10:8-12).



That's why Jesus was crucified. The heir of humanity (*Son of Man*) was a threat to the temple leaders and Caesar (Luke 22:66–23:2). Now, Herod Agrippa, like his grandfather, must get rid of those who proclaim Jesus as God's anointed ruler for the world (the *Christ*). Herod's claim to power is his attempt to take God's place. He wants people to worship them, and he accepts their worship:

### Acts 12:21-23 (NIV)

<sup>21</sup> On the appointed day Herod, wearing his royal robes, sat on his throne and delivered a public address to the people. <sup>22</sup> They shouted, “This is the voice of a god, not of a man.”

<sup>23</sup> Immediately, because Herod did not give praise to God, an angel of the Lord struck him down, and he was eaten by worms and died.

Mortal human rulers versus our eternal heavenly sovereign: that's a regular motif in Scripture (e.g. Psalms 56:4; 82:7; 90:3; 103:15; 118:6, 9; Isaiah 31:3; 51:2; Ezekiel 28:9). God shows the Jewish people that the Roman ruler they've allied with is a blasphemer.

Most people in Scripture are not mentioned by historians, but we know Herod died in AD 44. Here's how Jewish historian Josephus described his death:

### Josephus, *Antiquities* 19.344–350 (*Works of Josephus*, 1987, 523-524)

He ... 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. ...

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 reproveth 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. ... (350) And when he had been quite worn out by the pain in his belly for five days, he departed this life, being in the fifty-fourth year of his age, and in the seventh year of his reign.

But this isn't unique to Herod. Tyrants protect their power by killing or imprisoning their enemies. It's what Saul was doing (Acts 8:1). It's what Nebuchadnezzar tried to do to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego (Daniel 3). It's what Darius tried to do to Daniel (Daniel 6). It's what Antiochus IV tried to do to Jerusalem in 160s BC (Daniel 11).

The death of Antiochus IV is described in the Apocrypha (in the Catholic Bible):

**2 Maccabees 9:9, 12 (ESV-CE)**

<sup>9</sup> And so the ungodly man's body swarmed with worms, and while he was still living in anguish and pain, his flesh rotted away, and because of his stench the whole army felt revulsion at his decay. ... <sup>12</sup> When he could not endure his own stench, he uttered these words: "It is right to be subject to God, and no mortal should think that he is equal to God."

At issue is the question, **who rules the world?** The Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar? The Persian king Darius? The Seleucid ruler Antiochus IV? The Roman king Herod?

Well, they're all dead. Their kingdoms all fall. Earth has only one enduring ruler, only one kingdom that will never fall. God's proclamation of his Christ as our Lord will not fail. Despite Herod's ignominious death, *the word of God continued to spread and flourish* (verse 24).

**Reflection**

What stands out for you as you reflect on Acts 9–12?

.....  
.....  
.....

Consider what transformed Saul on the road to Damascus. People sometimes imagine Saul having a crisis of conscience, struggling with guilt as the reason for his conversion. But it doesn't seem to be a sense of failure that overwhelmed him. He thought he was right and everyone else was wrong (compare Philippians 3:5-6). So what was it that transformed him? What did he become aware of that changed his life? How does this inform the way we present the gospel message to people?

.....  
.....

Why did Cornelius' conversion make such a seismic shift for the Jerusalem church? If your faith experience has been mostly in one particular stream of the church (Pentecostal, Evangelical, mainstream, ...) how does Acts 10-11 affect what you consider the right way to worship God and express your Christian faith?

.....

.....

.....

Had you noticed before how persecution takes a new direction in Acts 12? Previously it came from the Jewish temple authorities. Now that the kingship of Jesus is extending beyond Jerusalem to other parts of the empire, it's the Roman authorities who want to silence this message. What does this say about the way Christians live in the wider community, and particularly in relation to the power of the state?

.....

.....

.....

For next week, please read Acts 13–16. As the gospel spreads to Europe, it raises questions that are so relevant for us today.