

Appearance and Reality
Acts 12: 1-24

1. From Herod's point of view he thought he was prospering greatly by the power of his own hand (v1.) The reality was that Herod was doing what Herod before him had done who crucified the Lord Jesus Christ. (**Acts 4: 27, 28** Psalm 76: 10.) Many times when we think we are prospering we are actually walking contrary to God.
2. Herod thought he was having his own way when he killed James. The reality was Herod was merely the instrument God determined to use when he appointed the hour of James' physical death (Hebrew 9: 27.) Man's lack of ability never excuses him from the responsibility to serve God, but God always uses even the worst of men to serve his purpose.
3. Herod thought he actually killed James. The reality was, according as God had determined before hand, Herod merely walked James into eternity where he entered the eternal bliss of beholding Christ in glory forevermore (John 11: 25, 26.)
4. Herod thought he brought great injury to the church of God. The reality is the Lord used Herod to give his church such a dire need that they remembered their inability and were drawn near to Christ by casting their care upon him (v5.)
5. Herod thought that once he had killed Peter then the people would behold how powerful he was and all--even those who were called Christians--would submit to him. The reality was that the Lord delivered Peter; the Lord increased Peter's understanding that nothing is impossible with the Lord; the Lord gave new assurance to Peter so that he could go forth preaching Christ our Deliverer even more boldly than before and through the preaching of the gospel the Lord's word increased in his people (vv11-17.)
6. Herod thought he had found life at his own hand. Truth is his life was really death. It issued in death to everyone who would not treat him as if he were God. He even killed his own guards (vv18, 19.)
7. Herod thought that by the strength of his own hand he had caused the people to fear him and seek peace. Truth is they desired peace for no other reason than that there food came from his country (v20.)
8. At last, Herod thought he had achieved his worldly goal when at last all eyes were on him on his throne and all praise went up to him just as he sought from the beginning (vv21, 22.) The reality of what king Herod accomplished by all his fleshly wisdom and strength in verse **23: And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost.**
9. So after Herod thought he had snuffed out the word of the Lord by exalting himself and killing the Lord's apostle, the reality was, **24: But the word of God grew and multiplied. (Isaiah 40: 8.)**

Whether opposed to Gods' church or passing themselves off as one with the church--the man who attempts to force his hand, to achieve that which profits his flesh, to gain a position so that all will regard him as great, shall die by the direct hand of God. What do we say to these things? Turn from your wisdom, your fleshly strength, to God Almighty **Proverbs 3: 5: Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. 6: In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.**