

*“A Tale of Two Lives!”*

1. **Intro:** In 246BC, when 14year old **Ying Zheng**(*Jung*) ascended the throne of the **Chin** provence of **China** and took for himself **the title 1<sup>st</sup> emperor**, he made his plans clear. And he proceeded to war against his neighboring states until he had united China and **made himself its emperor**. But his plans did not stop there, for he wanted to be similarly prepared for **life after death**. So he began the **construction of his tomb**, and around the site where his body would be buried he built a series of halls to house a **large standing army**, complete with soldiers weapons, horses, and chariots. There are no written records left of how big the whole complex is, but so far excavations have revealed **over 7,000 life sized terracotta clay figures** that were part of this army. **Each figure** has a **unique face**, **appropriate clothing for their rank**, and **real weapons**. **Clearly Ying had eternal ambitions for the fame of his name**. During his reign as Emperor of China, Ying **unified the country, the currency and the written language**. **But** he also gained a significant reputation as a **tyrant**, removing any opposition and forcing people to work as virtual slaves on his grand building projects. So much so, that **when he died his son’s reign** as emperor was soon **overthrown by revolt**. In the process **Ying’s tomb was smashed and burnt**, so that many of the terracotta figures found today are not intact. **The judgment of the Chinese people themselves was that they wanted no more of this emperor in any life.** [But that’s just man’s judgment...what next?]

- 1.1. **Our story today is: A Tale of Two Lives!**
- 1.2. Man has **only 2** opportunities in this life: **Self-Exaltation or God-Exaltation!**
  - 1.2.1. Ps:1:6 **For the LORD knows the way of the righteous, But the way of the ungodly shall perish.**
  - 1.2.2. We’ll meet one **Living a Self-Exalting Life (Herod)**; & another **Living a God-Exalting Life (Peter)**.
- 1.3. **Faith** is fundamentally **God-Exalting**; **Glory seeking** is fundamentally **Self-Exalting...and the 2 can’t fit into one person!**

2. **A TALE OF TWO LIVES! (1-25)**

- 2.1. **LIVING A SELF-EXALTING LIFE...HEROD!** (1-4)
- 2.2. **HEROD KILLS JAMES!**
- 2.3. **Meanwhile back in Jerusalem...Herod touches off another round of persecution.**
  - 2.3.1. This one as much **political as religious**.
- 2.4. **Herod? Which one?** – Herod the Great(killed babies, attempting to get Jesus); Herod Antipas (ordered John the Baptist head); Herod Agrippa I (is this Herod); Herod Agrippa II (Paul defends himself to).
- 2.5. This story told with such **brevity**. (Stephen, 68 verses, cuz of church’s development)
  - 2.5.1. **But maybe it’s to set the stage for the main emphasis – God’s deliverance of Peter.**

- 2.5.2. Remember, James asked for this...unknowingly (See Mark 10:35-37)
- 2.5.3. James was the 1<sup>st</sup> apostle to die, his brother the last.
- 2.6. (4) 4 on duty, x's 4 watches, to prevent escape again. (5:18-28)
- 2.7. After Passover – Curious blend of **formalism & wickedness**.<sup>1</sup>
- 2.8. **Good & Evil** have always been in conflict, since the fall.
- 2.8.1. Yet there is a limit, as to **the sea**, so to **the power of evil**.
- 2.8.2. Job 38:11 I said, this far you may come, but no farther, And here your proud waves must stop! [James yes, Peter no]
- 2.9. **LIVING A GOD-EXALTING LIFE...PETER!** (5-19)
- 2.10. **GOD FREES PETER!**
- 2.11. I'm sure Peter is anticipating a similar fate to that of James as he awaits his trial.
- 2.12. (5) A **five-point** teaching on **prayer**:
- 2.12.1. [1] Prayer must be **constant/intense/fervent/earnest**, not casual.
- 2.12.2. [2] Prayer must be **ongoing, was offered**. [verb tense implies continuing activity]
- 2.12.3. [3] Prayer must be **to God**. [In genuine contact with the living God]
- 2.12.3.1. Not with empty repetition, and not in unbelief.
- 2.12.4. [4] Prayer must be **specific**, not vague...**for him** (Peter).
- 2.12.5. [5] Prayer must be **communal by the church**.
- 2.12.5.1. The believer is **not** called to an **isolated life**.
- 2.13. I'm sure they thought, "why bring our petitions to the wolf (Herod) to request he release the lamb" (Peter).
- 2.13.1. So they bring their petitions to God instead!
- 2.13.2. 16 guards or 16,000 guards, these men & women would have still prayed him out!
- 2.14. **Praying for prisoners!**
- 2.14.1. Did you know that if you are a believer you must be concerned for prisoners?
- 2.14.2. **Mt.25** defines "*those who inherit the kingdom*" are those who: help the **hungry**; give drink to the **thirsty**; take in **strangers**; cloth those who need **clothes**; visit the **sick**; & visit the **prisoners**.
- 2.15. **Next week Mark Ritter & I have something special to help you to remember the prisoners! (Top Secret)**
- 2.16. (6) **When Herod was about to bring him out – God is never too late!**
- 2.17. (7,8) **Peter was fast asleep**: the angel has to knock him in the side, & grab him to get him up! {talk about "*touched by an angel*" } [he is so out of it vs.9]
- 2.17.1. **Peters 3 sleeping times**: At Mnt of Trans; in Gethsemane; now here.

<sup>1</sup> Griffith Thomas; pg.231

- 2.17.2. Perfect peace on **the very night** of contemplated execution!
- 2.17.3. This was sleep of **unquestioning trust** in God!!!  
 2.17.3.1. Ps.127:2b **He gives His beloved sleep.**
- 2.17.4. **Peter:** quiet conscience, perfect security, patient hope.
- 2.18. (9-11) Peter was totally passive throughout the entire incident. His escape was truly a deliverance.
- 2.18.1. No way to tell a Jack Bauer story of knocking out guards, sneaking past security cameras, & kicking down the front gate.
- 2.18.2. This was a **God thing** & to **Him** be the glory! (see 17)
- 2.19. (10) The angel **did** for Peter only what he could **not do** for himself, then departed!
- 2.20. (12) **Scene shift** to the **Christian community!** [Praying fervently for Peter]
- 2.20.1. Just that none of them really thought he'd be released.
- 2.20.2. Ever been guilty of expecting less than a complete answer to prayer?  
 2.20.2.1. Pray believing! {Like the church prayer meeting for **rain, & only 1 member** brought an **umbrella!**}
- 2.20.3. God is not wanting **great men**, but He is **wanting men** that will **dare to prove the greatness of their God!**
- 2.20.4. **Key** in **Ps.5:3** – [Prayer: **I will direct it to You**(Direction); **I will look up** (Expectation)]
- 2.21. It was the fervent prayer of the church that led to Peter's release!
- 2.21.1. This was similar to **Joshua's famous victory** over the Amalekites in Rephidim. [It was won by God's power released through intercession]
- 2.21.2. **Not** Joshua's intercession, he was focused on **fighting** not on **praying**.
- 2.21.3. It was **Moses'** intercession, aided by **Aaron & Hur**, that moved the hand of God & gave Joshua the victory (Ex.17:8-14) (tiresome intercession)
- 2.22. **The angel** fetched Peter out of prison, **but** it was **prayer** that fetched the angel.<sup>2</sup>
- 2.23. (15) **You are beside yourself**– so strong that Rhoda was accused of **being mad!**
- 2.24. God is real, and he answers prayer!
- 2.24.1. Many of us can grasp this concept **intellectually**, but when the **evidence** is knocking at the door we find it hard to believe.
- 2.25. (16) It is always right to **pray**, even if your faith is so weak you are surprised when the answer comes!
- 2.25.1. Keep knocking – **God opens doors!**
- 2.25.2. Maybe they didn't expect deliverance because of James situation.
- 2.25.3. Maybe prayed, "comfort him Lord, may he not suffer, give him ability to endure the pain, help him to witness to others, **but not for his deliverance!**" (Maybe they did, & just were so shocked)
- 2.26. What seemingly impossible door are **you** knocking at right now?
- 2.26.1. Might this change how you knock/pray?

- 2.27. **LIVING A SELF-EXALTING LIFE...HEROD (Part 2)! (20-25)**
- 2.28. **GOD KILLS HEROD!**
- 2.29. This chapter **begins** with *Herod killing James*, & **ends** with *God killing Herod!*
- 2.29.1. If you oppose God...you loose! (every time)
- 2.29.2. The 2<sup>nd</sup> commandment is seen clearly here, **"I the Lord God am a jealous God."**
- 2.30. If your goal is to **seek your own glory**...you **can't** be a Christian!
- 2.30.1. A Christian then is one who **seeks God's glory!**
- 2.30.1.1. This should become your life driving purpose.
- 2.31. John 5:44 **How can you believe, who receive honor/glory from one another, and do not seek the honor/glory that comes from the only God?**
- 2.31.1. God is committed to His own Name, reputation, glory, & fame.
- 2.31.2. **This is not self-centeredness, but for everyone's good.**
- 2.32. (22) **Tyre & Sidon** – had been denied access to Israel's grain markets.
- 2.32.1. They were willing to **grovel** & ask Agrippa to have mercy on them & lift the **grain embargo!**
- 2.33. God lets Herod's pride and self-centeredness and self-exaltation **go all the way to the end so that we can see where all our pride is going** and why we should crucify it as soon as we see it rear its ugly head!!!
- 2.33.1. This pride laid bare once again! – This is nothing new to Scripture.
- 2.33.1.1. **e.g.** Lucifer tried it; Adam & Eve tried it; Neb tried it.
- 2.34. **He who exalts himself will be humbled and he who humbles himself will be exalted.**
- 2.34.1. Herod is to be put down for the treason of his **self-exaltation** in the place of **God-exaltation.**
- 2.35. (22,23) **Josephus:** "Agrippa came to Caesarea, where there was a festival for him. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> day he put on a garment made entirely of silver and came into the theater early in the morning, at which time **the silver of his garment** reflecting the sun's rays shone so resplendently as to spread a horror on those gazing at him. Presently his flatterers exclaimed that he was a god, adding, 'Be merciful to us; for although till now we have revered you only as a man, henceforth we will regard you as superior to mortal nature.' But the king neither rebuked them nor rejected their impious flattery. However, as he looked up, he saw an owl and immediately understood that this bird was the messenger of ill tidings. Suddenly and violently a severe pain arose in his stomach. Therefore he looked at his friends and said, 'I, whom you call a god, am commanded now to leave this life; while Providence thus reproves the lying words you just now said to me.' After 5 days, exhausted by the stomach pain, he died, aged 53." (Adapted from *Antiquities of the Jews* 19:8:2)

- 2.36. For the creature to rise up & throw off the realization of his creatureliness & claim credit for doing things that only God does is not Bad Bad, but it is **high treason!**<sup>3</sup>
- 2.36.1. It's the ultimate sin to think, "*I did it all!*"
- 2.36.2. **Are we stealing Glory from God?** Are we attributing to Him every **good thing** in our life? Every **good gift** that we have? Every **ability** or **talent** that we possess? Every **good deed** that we do?
- 2.36.3. **Do you** make much of **Jesus** or much of **yourself**?  
Do you work to **honor** Christ? Does your **marriage** exalt Christ?  
Does your **temper** honor Christ? Does your **home** glorify Christ?
- 2.37. If we all desired to make much of the name & reputation of Jesus...it would cause us to **pray** different, **think** different, & **act** different.
- 2.37.1. This mindset would transform our entire life, thoughts, attitudes, speech, parenting, dating, finances,...
- 2.38. (24) With Agrippa's sudden removal, the **persecution ended temporarily** & once more the **word of God flourished**.
- 2.39. **Wrap up:**
- 2.40. **So why does God let James die & Peter live?**
- 2.40.1. The will of the Lord is always **wise & good**, but it is **not always predictable**. God spares **Peter**, & allows **James** to die.
- 2.41. **So why does God wait & spare Peter at the last minute?** (6a)
- 2.42. **So why does God allow Herod to kill James, but not permit him to act like a god?**
- 2.43. **Is this how you would have done it?**
- 2.43.1. Deut 29:29 **The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law.**
- 2.44. I hope this helps us to back off thinking we know everything that God *is doing, will do, & wants done*, in someone's life!
- 2.44.1. e.g. **Job's friends** thought they knew exactly what God was doing in Job's life. **But they were the farthest from the truth.**
- 2.44.2. When you're pondering playing God in someone's life remember...
- 2.44.3. **Is.55:8,9 For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways,**" says the Lord. "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are **My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts.**
- 2.45. So we **go on**, not knowing what will befall us, but **knowing Christ!**
- 2.45.1. **Whether in life or death, whether in suffering or in service!**
- 2.45.2. **To Peter, to live was Christ; for James, to die was gain!**
- 2.45.3. **Christ at all times; Christ in all circumstances; Christ at all costs; Christ for all our actualities; & Christ for all our possibilities.**<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Jason Jones; Sermoncentral.com

<sup>4</sup> Ibid; pg.242