

Acts 12

Acts 12.1-2 – about 44 AD (death of Herod Agrippa I)

V 1-2 - James – one of the "inner three" apostles

-**The other two?** Peter and John

-Remember the Garden of Gethsemane, the Mount of Transfiguration, the healing of Jairus' daughter (*Luke 8.40-56*), etc.

-So this was the Apostle James who was killed by Herod

Acts 12.3-11

V 3 – Feast of Unleavened Bread – late March or early April

-**Why did the Jews hate Christians at this time?**

1. The resurrection of Christ from the dead
2. The Christians associated with Gentiles
3. The church was spreading everywhere (a political and religious threat)

V 4 – **Why 16 soldiers to guard one man?** Because of *Acts 5.19* – Peter had escaped once before, and an angel opened the gates

-**"Bring him out before the people"** – similar to words about Christ (*Luke 23.25*)

V 5 – A classic battle: church vs. the world (or) chains, bars, prisons, soldiers, rulers vs. the church at prayer

-**Why "fervently?"** Because of the death of James

V 6 – Notice: "well guarded"

-**How "well guarded"?** Sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, guards in the front of the door watching over the prison

V 7 – **How did Peter's escape begin?** An angel appeared, and a light shone in the cell

-**What did the angel instruct Peter to do?** Get up quickly

-**Next event?** Peter's chains fell off

V 8 – **Next instructions of the angel?** Get dressed, put sandals on, wrap yourself in your cloak, and follow me

V 9 - **Why was Peter confused with reality?** The vision at Joppa; too confusing for Peter

V 10 – They passed two guards and went out the gate of the prison

-The angel led Peter to one street and then left him

Acts 12.11-17

V 11 – Now he knows for sure that God has brought about his release from prison

V 12 – **Where did Peter go next?** To the house of the mother of John Mark (the author of the second

gospel account)

- What were the Christians doing?** Having a "prayer meeting" (a gathering devoted to prayer)
- How many of us have ever been in an old-fashioned prayer meeting (where Christians actually spend an hour praying for things)?**

V 13 – **When Peter knocked at the door, who went to open it?** Rhoda, a slave-girl

V 14 – **Why didn't she open the door?** In her great joy at hearing Peter's voice, she ran to tell the other people at the prayer meeting (and forgot to let Peter in)

V 15 – **Did they believe in their prayers?** They were a little doubtful that God had freed Peter

- Their 2 excuses?** "You're crazy," "It's his angel"
- Sometimes today aren't we also shocked when we see our prayers answered?**
- Is there such a thing as guardian angels?** Apparently yes – **Read Matt. 18.10 and Heb. 1.14**
- So they assumed that it was Peter's angel, and not really Peter himself

V 16 – **What did Peter do?** Kept knocking at the door

V 17 – **What did Peter do first?** Got them to calm down and then gave them the account of what had happened

- What did he ask them to do?** Report these things to James and the other brethren
- If we were going to assign someone to be the first pope, James the half-brother of Jesus would have made a better candidate than Peter
- Why did he leave?** It was too dangerous to stay there

Acts 12.18-19

V 18 – What was the reaction of the soldiers when they discovered that Peter was missing? They were very disturbed

V 19 – **How mad was King Herod?** He ordered the guards to be executed

- Then what did Herod do?** Went down to Caesarea (probably for a vacation)
- This shows his cruel and heartless and uncaring nature

Acts 12.20-25

V 20 – Tyre and Sidon – wanted to be major exporters to Judah

V 21 – See the next page of these notes for a description by Josephus of the death of Herod

- Josephus was a professional historian in the First Century, and his description of the death of Herod perfectly matches the words of Luke here in *Acts 12*

V 22 – **Applications?** "Lord God the Pope," "The Holy Father," "Right Reverend..." etc.

V 23 – Remember that Luke was a medical doctor

- Peristalsis – intestinal worms; took 5 days to die
- Phil. 1.9-11* – Every knee shall bow, even Herod's

V 24 – What a contrast

Romans 12.19 – Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay," says the Lord.

V 25 – The stage was set for the second half of *Acts* – "*into all the world,*" departing from Antioch (with the First Missionary Journey)

Assignment for next week:

-Think about the influence of witchcraft and magic in our country today, and bring examples of that influence (ads, personal stories, etc.)

From Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 19.8.2 343-361:

Now when Agrippa had reigned three years over all Judea he came to the city Caesarea, which was formerly called Strato's Tower; and there he exhibited spectacles in honor of Caesar, for whose well-being he had been informed that a certain festival was being celebrated. At this festival a great number were gathered together of the principal persons of dignity of his province.

On the second day of the spectacles he put on a garment made wholly of silver, of a truly wonderful texture, and came into the theater early in the morning. There the silver of his garment, being illuminated by the fresh reflection of the sun's rays, shone out in a wonderful manner, and was so resplendent as to spread awe over those that looked intently upon him. 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."

Upon this the king neither rebuked them nor rejected their impious flattery. But he shortly afterward looked up and saw an owl sitting on a certain rope over his head, and immediately understood that this bird was the messenger of ill tidings, just as it had once been the messenger of good tidings to him; and fell into the deepest sorrow.

A severe pain arose in his belly, striking with a most violent intensity. He therefore looked upon his friends, and said, "I, whom you call a god, am commanded presently to depart this life; while Providence thus reproves 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. But I am bound to accept what Providence allots, as it pleases God; for we have by no means lived ill, but in a splendid and happy manner."

When he had said this, his pain became violent. Accordingly he was carried into the palace, and the rumor went abroad everywhere that he would certainly die soon. The multitude sat in sackcloth, men, women and children, after the law of their country, and besought God for the king's recovery. All places were also full of mourning and lamentation. Now the king rested in a high chamber, and as he saw them below lying prostrate on the ground he could not keep himself from weeping.

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. He ruled four years under Caius Caesar, three of them were over Philip's tetrarchy only, and on the fourth that of Herod was added to it; and he reigned, besides those, three years under Claudius Caesar, during which time he had Judea added to his lands, as well as Samaria and Caesarea.

The revenues that he received out of them were very great, no less than twelve millions of drachmae. But he borrowed great sums from others, for he was so very liberal that his expenses exceeded his incomes, and his generosity was boundless.

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