

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

Lesson 11

Acts 12

Following our study of the model church at Antioch, Luke takes us back to Jerusalem where a famine has begun and Herod is on a campaign to gain popularity with the Jews by persecuting the Church. Probably occurring in 44 AD, some fifteen years after Christ's crucifixion, Herod picks up where the Sanhedrin left off with the stoning of Stephen. Recorded in Chapter 12 is the account of the martyrdom of the first Apostle to die for the Gospel and for Christ, James the brother of John. James was one of the "sons of Thunder" and one of three people—John and Peter being the other two—to accompany Jesus to the Mount of Transfiguration.

Following the "success" of Stephen's death, Herod captures and imprisons Peter, also intending to put him to death following Passover. What follows is a dramatic story about a praying Church, Peter's faith, and the Lord's continued protection.

For our study this week, read Acts Chapter 12 and answer the following:

1. Why did Herod have "James the brother of John" killed? (Acts 12:1)
2. How had Christ referred to James and John? (Mark 3:13-19)
3. Why would James' death at the hands of Herod have pleased the Jews? (Matthew 24:9, and John 15:18)
4. While walking with Christ as disciples, then Apostles, what controversy did James and John become involved in? (Mark 10:35-45)
5. What was the Feast of Unleavened Bread? (Leviticus 23:1-8 and Deuteronomy 16:16)
6. From reading Acts 12:4, what can we tell about Peter's role and influence in spreading the Gospel, and what Herod thought of Peter?
7. Why do you suppose Herod would have taken such severe measures to make sure that Peter did not escape? (Acts 5:17-20)
8. How was Peter secured so that he could not possibly escape? (Acts 12:6)

9. In Acts 12:8-11, the angels rescue Peter. What does Peter think is actually happening?
10. In Acts verses 12 through 16, Peter goes to the house of Mary. At the time of Peter's arrival, his fellow apostles were there earnestly praying for his release. What is their initial reaction when Peter knocks on the door?
11. Peter relays the story of how God rescued him from prison then tells them to go and tell James. How can this be, since James was killed in verse 1? (Galatians 2:9)
12. What happens to the guards who were responsible for guarding Peter?
13. How does Acts 12:19-20 compare to Acts 11:27-28?
14. What brought about Herod's death?

Again, we see that even with death and great persecution, the Church flourished and grew. The work of Christ continues, God's will be done, and not even the gates of hell will prevail against it. Let's take encouragement from this week's lesson that our work in the kingdom is not in vain, God will grant us the victory, Christ will return and will reign in victory. Be certain of it, and as James wrote, "Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything." (James 1:2-4, NIV)

Have a great week everyone!

In Christ,

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