

# HEROD'S VIOLENCE TO THE CHURCH; HIS VIOLENT DEATH; PRAYING FOR PETER'S RELEASE; -- ACTS 12:1-25

## OBSERVATION

## INTERPRETATION

## APPLICATION

Monday 7:00pm, H 105 (1st floor, High School--foot of stairs, behind the gym, by the vending machine area), Tuesday 7:00am, Family, Room, CCCM – Phil Twente, cell #714 425 9221; email – [ptwente@gmail.com](mailto:ptwente@gmail.com) For past studies, audio plus notes, go to: <http://www.missioncalvary.com/> Click on “Bible Studies” on the left column. References include commentaries by numerous pastor/teachers.

### **HEROD'S VIOLENCE TO THE CHURCH - VS.1-4**

*Act 12:1 Now about that time Herod the king stretched out his hand to harass some from the church.*

*Act 12:2 Then he killed James the brother of John with the sword.*

*Act 12:3 And because he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to seize Peter also. Now it was during the Days of Unleavened Bread.*

*Act 12:4 So when he had arrested him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four squads of soldiers to keep him, intending to bring him before the people after Passover.*

### **PETER FREED FROM PRISON – VS. 5-19**

*Act 12:5 Peter was therefore kept in prison, but constant prayer was offered to God for him by the church.*

*Act 12:6 And when Herod was about to bring him out, that night Peter was sleeping, bound with two chains between two soldiers; and the guards before the door were keeping the prison.*

v. 2 James, **one of the sons of thunder**, the sons of Zebedee. He was in the inner circle with Jesus. He, his brother John and Peter were chosen by Jesus for special occasions...**Mt. of Transfiguration; raising of Jairus' daughter; praying in Gethsemane.** So one of the three that was chosen by Jesus to be a part of the inner circle, he with his brother John and Peter. So Herod killed James with a sword. He beheaded him. – cf. **Mark 10:35-40**

v.3 Now according to the tradition, **no one was to be tried or no one was to be put to death during the holiday of Unleavened Bread.**

v. 4 So he put Peter in prison and he delivered him to four quaternions (16) of soldiers. **In Peter's case he was chained to two guards**, one on either side. Then there was another guard at the door of the cell, another guard at the door of the ward of the prison. And thus there were **four guards constantly on duty watching Peter**, intending to bring him before the people after Passover; after the Feast of Unleavened Bread, because then they could legally again have a trial. How **bleak the situation must have looked! Even hopeless!** There appeared no possibility of Peter's escape. What could the little community of Jesus, in its powerlessness, **do against the armed might** of Rome?

The answer of course, is **TO PRAY!!!**

v. 5 *Peter was therefore kept in prison, but constant (ektenes – without ceasing, fervent) prayer was offered to God for him by the church.*

Notice Seven essentials mentioned in this passage for effective prayer:

#1 – v. 5 **The need!** There is real need here! James killed; Peter imprisoned! – cf. **Ex. 2:23-25; Phil. 4:19**

#2 – v.5 There is **continual fervency!** Constant prayer by people who believe that God can! –; **Luke 11:5-13; 18:1-8**

Notice the contentment of Peter – he was sleeping soundly!! **Phil 4:6-7**

**We've been seeing one marvelous conversion after another** – the **three thousand** on the Day of Pentecost, the **Samaritans**, the Ethiopian **eunuch**, **Saul of Tarsus**, the **Gentile centurion Cornelius** and the **mixed crowd in Antioch**.

The Word of God was spreading, **now we see a serious setback** in the death of James and the imprisonment of Peter, both of whom were apostles and leaders of the Jerusalem church.

Herod Agrippa I was the tyrant responsible for this double assault upon the work of God. It must have seemed like a time of grave crisis, but we also the marvelous rescue of Peter by the intervention of God.

Thus **the destructive power of Herod and the saving power of God are contrasted**. Indeed throughout church history the pendulum has swung between expansion and opposition, growth and shrinkage, advance and retreat, although the assurance that even the powers of death and hell will never prevail against Christ's church, since it is built securely on the rock, Jesus Christ!

### **HEROD THE KING! – HEROD AGRIPPA 1**

Herod the king was Herod Agrippa 1. He was the grandson of Herod the Great. He shared some of his grandfather's characteristics and after the emperors Caligula and Claudius had given him successive portions of Palestinian territory, his kingdom was as extensive as his grandfather's.

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### OBSERVATION

*Act 12:7 Now behold, an angel of the Lord stood by him, and a light shone in the prison; and he struck Peter on the side and raised him up, saying, "Arise quickly!" And his chains fell off his hands.*

*Act 12:8 Then the angel said to him, "Gird yourself and tie on your sandals"; and so he did. And he said to him, "Put on your garment and follow me."*

*Act 12:9 So he went out and followed him, and did not know that what was done by the angel was real, but thought he was seeing a vision.*

*Act 12:10 When they were past the first and the second guard posts, they came to the iron gate that leads to the city, which opened to them of its own accord; and they went out and went down one street, and immediately the angel departed from him.*

*Act 12:11 And when Peter had come to himself, he said, "Now I know for certain that the Lord has sent His angel, and has delivered me from the hand of Herod and from all the expectation of the Jewish people."*

*Act 12:12 So, when he had considered this, he came to the house of Mary, the mother of John whose surname was Mark, where many were gathered together praying.*

*Act 12:13 And as Peter knocked at the door of the gate, a girl named Rhoda (Rose) came to answer.*

### INTERPRETATION

**#3 - vs. 7-12** There is **Divine intervention** – Acts 12:7-12

God is not bound to methods. Later on God is going to release Paul and Silas from the Philippian jail. But rather than sending an angel to open the doors and escort them out. God's going to **shake the walls down**. He sends an earthquake. Shakes the walls down and Paul and Silas are released. So He is a God of variety.

**#4 - v.11** There is **renewed confidence in God** – "Now I know for certain that the Lord"...

**#5 – vs. 12-16** There is **some surprise**; cf. Acts 15:36-41; 1 Pet. 5:13;

### APPLICATION

#### **Amazing Grace (My Chains are Gone) – Chris Tomlin**

*Amazing grace/ How sweet the sound/ That saved a wretch like me/ I once was lost, but now I'm found/ Was blind, but now I see/ 'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear/ And grace my fears relieved/ How precious did that grace appear/ The hour I first believed*

*Chorus:*

*My chains are gone/ I've been set free/ My God, my Savior has ransomed me/ And like a flood His mercy reigns/ Unending love, amazing grace*

*The Lord has promised good to me/ His word my hope secures/ He will my shield and portion be/ As long as life endures*

*The earth shall soon dissolve like snow/ The sun forbear to shine/ But God, who called me here below/ Will be forever mine/ Will be forever mine/ You are forever mine*

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### OBSERVATION

**Act 12:14** When she recognized Peter's voice, because of her gladness she did not open the gate, but ran in and announced that Peter stood before the gate.

**Act 12:15** But they said to her, "You are beside yourself!" Yet she kept insisting that it was so. So they said, "It is his angel."

**Act 12:16** Now Peter continued knocking; and when they opened the door and saw him, they were astonished.

**Act 12:17** But motioning to them with his hand to keep silent, he declared to them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he said, "Go, tell these things to James and to the brethren." And he departed and went to another place.

**Act 12:18** Then, as soon as it was day, there was no small stir among the soldiers about what had become of Peter.

**Act 12:19** But when Herod had searched for him and not found him, he examined the guards and commanded that they should be put to death. And he went down from Judea to Caesarea, and stayed there.

### INTERPRETATION

Notice Peter's continual knocking!!! Does God ever answer prayer while one is praying?

#6 – v. 17 There is clear testimony to what God can do! – “How the Lord had brought him out of prison.”

v. 17 “went to another place.” Could there have been other “house churches” been praying for Peter’s release?

#7 – v. 18 There is confused reaction by unbelievers! – “there was no small stir among the soldiers”...

v. 19 “commanded that they should be put to death” – cf. v. 2 – “intending to bring him before the people after Passover.” Could Herod have had in mind to put Peter to death on the same day that Jesus, Peter’s Master, was put to death?

### APPLICATION

#### Questions:

1. After seeing one marvelous conversion after another – Pentecost, the Samaritans, the Ethiopian eunuch, Saul of Tarsus, the Gentile centurion Cornelius and the mixed crowd in Antioch, what do we see occurring in chapter 12?
2. Do you see anything unique regarding James, the brother of John, and Peter, being the target of Herod's arrest?
3. Does the timing mentioned in verses 3&4 remind you of anything else that occurred on these dates? What was the relationship between this Herod (Herod Agrippa 1)- (Acts 12) and the Herod (Herod Antipas) that presided of Jesus' trial (Luke 23)?
4. Do you think the church prayed for James, the brother of John, when Herod stretched out his hand and took him?
5. In what manner, did the church pray for Peter's release? (v.5)
6. Do you find anything of interest in verse 6?
7. Were there many or few praying for Peter's release?
8. Do you think that Peter's release by the angel was related to the prayer by the church?
9. Is praying with expectancy an absolute requirement for prayer to be answered? Have you ever been “astonished” by the way the Lord answered your prayer/s?
10. Do you think Peter was familiar with the location of the house of John Mark's mother? Is there a connection with 1 Peter 5:13?
11. What do you think is meant by “delivered me from ....the expectation of the Jewish people”? (v. 11)
12. “And he departed and went to another place.” Can you think of a couple of possibilities why Peter may have done that? (v.17)
13. In verse 19 we read “Herod commanded the guards to be put to death”. What does that tell us about what Herod was planning for Peter?
14. Why did the angel of the Lord strike Herod? (v.23)
15. How important is it to give all glory to God? What can happen when we don't?

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### HEROD'S VIOLENT DEATH – VS. 20-24 – WHAT GLORIFIES GOD!

*Act 12:20 Now Herod had been very angry with the people of Tyre and Sidon; but they came to him with one accord, and having made Blastus the king's personal aide their friend, they asked for peace, because their country was supplied with food by the king's country.*

*Act 12:21 So on a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat on his throne and gave an oration to them.*

*Act 12:22 And the people kept shouting, "The voice of a god and not of a man!"*

*Act 12:23 Then immediately an angel of the Lord struck him, because he did not give glory to God. And he was eaten by worms and died.*

*Act 12:24 But the word of God grew and multiplied.*

### BARNABAS AND SAUL APPONTED – V. 25

*Act 12:25 And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem when they had fulfilled their ministry, and they also took with them John whose surname was Mark.*

**V. 21 “on a set day”** – According to Josephus, it was the second day of the games celebrated in honor of Claudius. The place was the theatre Caesarea. Josephus says he was clothed in a robe made entirely of silver. Herod died at the age of 54, in the 7<sup>th</sup> year of his reign (3<sup>rd</sup> year of his reign over Judea). He lingered for 5 days, suffering excruciating torments, being eaten with worms.

**Taking or stealing God's glory!** – cf. Is. 42:8; Acts 3:11-13; Acts 14:11-16 - Now the danger for the person who is exercising those gifts of the Holy Spirit is, the danger is that they start sometimes receiving the adulation, the admiration from the crowd. The moment you begin to receive, the credit or you begin to accept the adulation, your ministry is in a very precarious position. In Acts 3:11 notice how Peter immediately disassociates himself from the miracle. He corrects them immediately. Why look so intently at us as though as by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk? We didn't have anything to do with it. Why do you look at us? Then he begins to explain the miracle that they saw. The men that God uses are men who are not seeking glory or fame for themselves. They are men who have come to the cross in their own lives. The same with Paul and Barnabas in Acts 14:11.

**My chains are gone!**

**I've been set free!**

**My God, my Savior has ransomed me!**

**And like a flood His mercy reigns!**

**Unending love, amazing grace!**

Note what happens when a man, such as Herod, doesn't give God the glory!

**Reviewing important occurrences mentioned in this passage for/due to effective prayer:**

- #1 – v. 5 The need!** There is real need here! James killed; Peter imprisoned! – cf. Ex. 2:23-25; Phil. 4:19
- #2 – v.5** There is **continual fervency!** Constant prayer by people who believe that God can! –; Luke 11:5-13; 18:1-8
- #3 – vs. 7-12** There is **Divine intervention** – Acts 12:7-12
- #4 – v.11** There is **renewed confidence** in God – “Now I know for certain that the Lord”...
- #5 – vs. 12-16** There is **some surprise**; cf. Acts 15:36-41; 1 Pet. 5:13;
- #6 – v. 17** There is **clear testimony** to what God can do! – “How the Lord had brought him out of prison.”
- #7 – v. 18** There is **confused reaction** by unbelievers! – “there was no small stir among the soldiers”...

Note the chapter opens with James dead, Peter in prison and Herod triumphing. It closes with Herod dead, Peter free and the word of God triumphing! Such is the power of God to overthrow hostile human plans and to establish His own in their place!!