

# ACTS

## of the Holy Spirit

### Session #19 – 12:1 - 25

## I. Martyrdom and Imprisonment (12:1 – 4)

### Verse 1

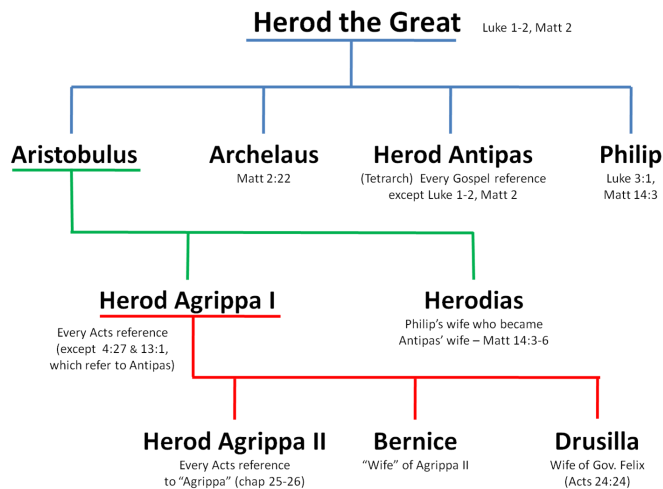
It was about this time (kairos = God's timing [not kronos]) that King Herod [name means "heroic"]

Which Herod is which?

1) Herod the Great – tried to kill Jesus as a baby – Matt. 2

2) Herod Anitipas – He was involved in Jesus' trial and crucifixion – also had John the Baptist beheaded - Matt. 14

3) **Herod Agrippa I** – son of Aristobulus and Berenice, and grandson of Herod the Great (Jesus birth). Appointed by Emperors Caligula and Claudius to be King of all Palestine.



arrested some

who belonged to the church,

intending to persecute (kakoo = to vex/oppress) them.

This persecution was politically beneficial for Herod.

Jesus said, "...the time is coming when anyone who kills you will think they are offering a service to God." John 16:2

### Verse 2

He had James, [name means "supplanter" (Jacob)]

the brother of John,

put to death

with the sword. (beheaded)

This was a new level of persecution! This was the first time one of the Apostles had been killed. James was one of the "inner" circle for Jesus and was considered a leader of the disciples.

Jesus warned them to "expect" persecution. (Matt. 10:16 – 26)

Note: There is no effort to replace James as their was with Judas.



### Verse 3

When he saw

that this met with approval

among the Jews, (leaders have always been

driven by public opinion!)

he proceeded to seize Peter also.

[This happened

during the Festival of Unleavened Bread]

Some (like Paul) persecuted the church on moral grounds, but others (like Herod) persecuted for totally political motives.

During the Feast because 1) he knew where Peter would be, and 2) he knew this would impact the greatest numbers of Christians.

#### Verse 4

After arresting him,  
he put him in prison,  
handing him over to be guarded  
by four squads (quaternions = four guards)  
of four soldiers each.

Herod intended to bring him out  
for public trial  
after the Passover. [Easter = pascha]

Although it is the time of the Jewish Passover, it is also during the new celebration for Christians called Easter. Tyndale's translation into the German (ester) in 1530 then becomes our modern day word for "Easter" even though the King James (written in 1611) continues to use the Old Testament word "Passover" as the interpretation of "pascha".

## **II. Miraculous Freedom (12:5 – 19a)**

#### Verse 5

So [therefore]  
Peter was kept in prison,

Peter had been miraculously released from prison before (Acts 5:17 – 21), but Herod was going to make sure this did not happen again!

but [there is something else at work that is much more powerful than human soldiers!]

the church (ekklesia) was earnestly (ektenes = lit. a medical term which means to stretch out a muscle to its limits! = passionate to the limit - without ceasing/fervent)

Same word is used of Jesus in the Garden (Luke 22:44)

James writes, "...the *effectual fervent* prayer of a *righteous man* *avails* (accomplishes) much" (James 5:16, KJV)  
praying to God for him. (In His name and authority)

#### Verse 6

The night before Herod [God's timing is never late]  
was to bring him to trial,  
Peter was sleeping (he shows no signs of anxiety)

- 1) between two soldiers,
- 2) bound with two chains,
- 3) and sentries stood guard  
at the entrance. [of the prison]

Three layers of imprisonment with three iron locks and many trained warriors! None of these are too much for God and His messengers!

#### Verse 7

Suddenly [behold!]  
an angel of the Lord appeared  
and a light shone in the cell.  
He struck Peter on the side  
and woke him up.

"Quick, get up!" he said,  
and the chains fell off Peter's wrists.

Prayer can be answered in many ways!

The answer can be YES!, NO!, WAIT!, or WISDOM!

Prayer does not always ensure our freedom from persecution, but it does as the Lord wills. The church prayed and God acted!  
2 Chr. 7:14 – "if my people...will humble themselves and pray..."

This is one of the most important developments in our understanding of our relationship with Christ – the gift of prayer!



#### Verse 8

Then the angel said to him,  
"Put on your clothes and sandals."  
And Peter did so.  
"Wrap your cloak around you  
and follow me," the angel told him.

#### Verse 9

Peter followed him  
out of the prison,  
but he had no idea (eido = understanding)  
that what the angel was doing  
was really happening;  
he thought he was seeing a vision.

Peter followed even without complete understanding!

Peter had seen visions and angels so many times, it was hard for him to know the difference any more.

Verse 11

Then Peter came to himself  
and said,

“Now I know (eido)  
without a doubt (alethos = truth has dawned)  
that the Lord has sent his angel  
and rescued me  
1) from Herod’s clutches  
2) and from everything  
the Jewish people were  
hoping would happen.”

It is interesting that Peter knows he is being attacked on two sides: The political and the religious.

Verse 12

When this had dawned on him,  
he went to the house of Mary  
the mother of John,  
also called Mark,  
where many people had gathered  
and were praying.



We see the first introduction of John Mark. The cousin of Barnabas and a later co-worker with Paul and Barnabas.

Verse 13

Peter knocked at the outer entrance,  
and a servant named Rhoda (“Rose”) came  
to answer the door.

Verse 14

When she recognized Peter’s voice,  
she was so overjoyed  
she ran back without opening it  
and exclaimed,  
“Peter is at the door!”

Verse 15

“You’re out of your mind,”  
they told her.

When she kept insisting that it was so,  
they said,

“It must be his angel.”

Verse 16

But Peter kept on knocking,  
and when they opened the door  
and saw him,  
they were astonished.

Verse 17

Peter motioned with his hand  
for them to be quiet  
and described how the Lord  
had brought him out of prison.

“Tell James  
and the other brothers and sisters  
about this,” he said,  
and then he left for another place.

Obviously, this reference to James here is to the James that is Jesus’ brother and the head of the Jerusalem church.

Verse 18

[Now] – scene change

In the morning,  
there was no small commotion (tarachos =  
disturbance/tumult)  
among the soldiers  
as to what had become of Peter.

It is amazing how the fear of death can get a person moving!  
These 16 soldiers are not facing certain death if they cannot  
recover Peter before too long.

### Verse 19a

After Herod had a thorough search made for him and did not find him, he cross-examined the guards and ordered that they be executed.

Now the king himself is embarrassed!

This was a miracle of God's protection over Peter and the Christians, because he did not evaporate into thin air, he was still there, but they did not find him!

If the Lord can set him free – The Lord can keep him free!

## III. Miraculous Assassination (12:19b – 25)

### Verse 19b

Then Herod went from Judea to Caesarea and stayed there.



### Verse 20

He had been quarreling (thymomacheo = fighting mad!) with the people of Tyre and Sidon;

they now joined together and sought an audience with him. After securing the support of Blastus,

(name = "sprout") a trusted personal servant of the king, they asked for peace, because they depended on the king's country for their food supply.

A political treaty for their own protection.



### Verse 21

On the appointed day Herod, wearing his royal robes, sat on his throne and delivered a public address to the people.

### Verse 22

They shouted, "This is the voice of a god, not of a man."

The people worshipped Herod as God!

### Verse 23

Immediately, (parachrema = On that very spot!) because Herod did not give praise (doxa = glory) to God, an angel of the Lord struck him down, (patasso = smite/hit) and he was eaten by worms and died.

God's judgement is only restrained by his grace!

Why does God take out Herod when He allows others to live and persecute the church?

The simple answer – Herod had already killed one of the leaders of the early church (James) and has now planned to kill another (Peter) and is trying to establish himself as a "god" in the eyes of the Gentiles. All of this causes a strong response from God.

Back in Daniel 4, God humiliated but spared Nebuchadnezzar's life.

Note: Angels are not always messengers of peace!

### Verse 24

But the word of God continued to spread (auxano = enlarge in influence and reach) and flourish. (plethyno = to multiply through people) The more persecution happens, the more the gospel spreads and multiplies!

### Verse 25

When Barnabas and Saul had finished their mission, (Taking the offering to the Jerusalem Church) they returned from Jerusalem, taking with them John, also called Mark.

4 This was the first trial period for John Mark.