

Acts Chapter 12 - Handout

In this chapter we see the furtherance of the gospel among the Jewish people. Although Luke (the author of Acts) is going to highlight the advances of ministry of the gospel within the Gentile world, he does want to show that God is still ministering to the Jewish world.

v.1-2 - Herod Agrippa I, grandson of Herod the Great, has James the brother of John killed (beheaded). James is the first of the apostles to be martyred. Herod followed the law of Moses and was doing what he thought pleased the Jews. Unlike Herod the Great, Herod Agrippa was popular with the people.

v.3-6 - Since James death pleased the people, Herod arrested Peter and put him in prison, waiting for the Passover to be over so that he could kill him. (days of unleavened bread are part of Passover celebration). Quarternion: four soldiers. Easter (originally this was a pagan festival held in April for Eastre the goddess of spring, but here it is probably used synonymously with Passover). Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, with two chains, and keepers in front of the door.

v.7-11 - the rescue: the angel of the Lord came to him, light shined in prison, smote Peter on the side, raised him up, said arise. The chains fell off. Angel tells him to get dressed: gird yourself and bind on sandals, put on your garment and follow. Angel leads past first and second ward (guard post) up to iron gate to city which opened to them and they went into the street. Angel left. And now Peter knows that this wasn't a dream: God had delivered him. You may have to go through some stages to get delivered, but in the end you are delivered.

v.12-17 Peter goes to the house of Mary the mother of John Mark (John Mark is introduced first by name) where many were gathered praying for Peter. Peter knocks and Rhoda comes to door but is so happy that she doesn't open it. Runs in to tell everyone Peter is outside by they don't believe her. Is it possible that they were praying with know expectation of God delivering Peter. They go to door and are astonished and Peter tells them what happened. He tells them to go tell James (most likely the brother of Jesus who would become the leader of the Jerusalem church and the author of the book of James) then departs for another place.

v.18-23 - Now in the morning there was a lot of noise among the soldiers about Peter's disappearance and when Herod found out he had the keepers put to death. He left Judaea to Caesarea. Tyre and Sidon which depended on Herod for trade through their port and for goods and food, had lost favor with Herod. Representatives from Tyre and Sidon came to Herod to fix things, Herod spoke and they praised him as being voice of a god. Herod didn't deny praise that is reserved for God. God smote him with an intestinal disease.

v.24-25 - But the word of God spread. Barnabas and Saul returned to Antioch and took John Mark with them, a cousin of Barnabas. The person of John Mark is now introduced. He is the author of the gospel of Mark.