



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States



The Acts of the Apostles

Chapter 12

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Introduction

In This Chapter We Will Study:

- The martyrdom of St. James, and the miraculous release of St. Peter from prison
- The death of Herod, and the continued success of the word of God

Herod's Violence to the Church (12:1-4)



- While Saul and Barnabas were at Antioch
- Herod begins to harass some from the church
- This was Herod Agrippa 1 son of Herod Antipas who beheaded John the Baptist, Mt 14:1-12
- He was a grandson of Herod the Great who slew the infants at Bethlehem, Mt 2:1-16
- He beheaded James the brother the John
- James the greater, son of Zebedee
- The first apostle to suffer martyrdom

Herod's Violence to the Church (12:1-4)



- Herod would rather please men than God
- Hence, he seized St. Peter
- Intending to bring St. Peter before the people after Passover
- Four quaterions of soldiers. Sixteen soldiers divided into four watches, so that four would be on watch all the time, two in the prison and two at the door

St. Peter Freed from Prison (12:5-19)



- Constant, intense, steady, ardent prayer was being offered by the church
- The prayers of the godly overturn the counsel of tyrants
- The intention of Herod was to bring him out as soon as the Passover was over
- The Jews thought that executions during this week were a desecration
- St. Peter was sleeping fearless of death, being in a good cause, and having nothing to ruffle and disturb his mind
- Though bound with chains between two guards, with more before the door

St. Peter Freed from Prison (12:5-19)



- An angel stands before St. Peter, along with a shining light
- The angel strikes St. Peter in such a way as was just sufficient to awake him from his sleep
- Told to gird himself, tie his sandals, put on his garments, and follow
- There was no haste
- He supposed that it was a representation made to his mind similar to what he had seen before
- All seemed so strange that, just aroused from sleep, he was uncertain whether it was real
- St. Peter follows the angel past the guards and into the city

St. Peter Freed from Prison (12:5-19)



- The soldiers on watch seem to have been stationed apart, one near St. Peter's door, the other near the gate
- Having brought him into a place in which he no longer needed his assistance
- What is proper to God he always does: what is proper to man he requires him to perform
- It was after it was passed, and the angel had left him in the street, that St. Peter was first sure that it was no vision, but that the Lord had delivered him

St. Peter Freed from Prison (12:5-19)



- When he had weighed every thing, and was fully satisfied of the Divine interposition, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John Mark, the author of the Gospel, where it appears many were gathered together making prayer and supplication, and probably for St. Peter's release
- The door was probably shut for fear of the Jews; and, as most of the houses in the east have an area before the door, it might have been at this outer gate that St. Peter stood knocking
- It was the night, and they were Christians
- The knocker might be an enemy or a friend
- The damsel, a maid-servant, had charge of the door

St. Peter Freed from Prison (12:5-19)



- He is first left standing at the door by Rhoda
- Instead of opening, in her gladness, she flew to tell the good news
- They seemed to have regarded his rescue as so difficult and so hopeless
- She insisted on it
- Every man has a guardian angel
- They were now convinced that it was St. Peter, and they were amazed that he had been rescued
- As yet they were of course ignorant of the manner in which it was done

St. Peter Freed from Prison (12:5-19)



- Their joy was so tumultuous that he could not be heard
- He relates what happened, sends word to St. James and the brethren, and departs
- St. James the brother of the Lord
- As the bishop of the church at Jerusalem
- St. Peter's message seems to recognize the fact that he was a leading man
- Perhaps the apostles had retired from the city for fear of Herod
- The sleeping soldiers did not discover that the prisoner was gone until morning

St. Peter Freed from Prison (12:5-19)



- Herod is unable to find St. Peter
- Herod examines the soldiers and has them put to death
- He believed, or pretended to believe, that the escape of St. Peter was owing to the negligence of the keepers
- Herod leaves Judea and goes to Caesarea
- In this city by the sea, the Roman capital of Palestine, he made his abode a part of the time, though Jerusalem was his usual residence

Herod's Violent Death (12:20-24)



- The people of Tyre and Sidon appeal for peace to Herod through Blastus, the king's aide
- Blastus was probably a eunuch, and had considerable influence over his master Herod; and, to reach the master, it is likely they bribed the chamberlain
- The reason of this displeasure is not known
- Tyre and Sidon were on the seacoast, but Herod's dominions occupied the country behind the

Herod's Violent Death (12:20-24)



- On a set day, in royal apparel and on his throne, Herod gives them an oration
- His apparel was all of silver, and of a wonderful contexture; and that going in this very early in the morning into the theatre, the silver shone so with the rays of the rising sun, that it struck the spectators with terror and admiration
- It is thought that his speech was an announcement of his decision in the matter of difficulty with Tyre and Sidon, and that the ambassadors were present
- The people praise him as having the voice of a god and not of a man

Herod's Violent Death (12:20-24)



- An angel of the Lord strikes him immediately because he did not give glory to God
- God resists the proud
- His death was most evidently a judgment from God
- He is eaten of worms and dies
- The Christian doctrine preached by the apostles grew and multiplied
- The persecutions had now ceased
- The church increased and flourished

Barnabas and Saul Appointed (12:25)



- This verse is introductory to the next chapter, which introduces the era of Gentile missions
- Barnabas and Saul return from Jerusalem with John Mark, fulfilling their ministry
- When they had accomplished the purpose for which they had been sent there; that is, to deposit the alms of the church at Antioch in the hands of the elders of the churches, Acts 11:30
- This was Mark the son of Mary, mentioned Acts 12:12
- He accompanied the apostles to Cyprus, and afterwards in several of their voyages, till they came to Perga in Pamphylia



Conclusion

- God allowed the killing of James but saved Peter, is there a preference in God's dealing? Why He allowed this?
- "*And because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to seize Peter*" (v 3). Trying to please people causes a lot of trouble. Explain.
- Peter therefore was kept in prison. What's your meditation for this verse?



Conclusion

- But prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him” What is the role of the church in the time of persecution?
- Sometimes we pray, but our prayers are not with faith or confidence enough, but the Lord proves to us that He responds to us at all times. Explain.
- *"And those that walk in pride He is able to put down" (Daniel 4:37). This verse is spoken about King Nebuchadnezzar, how can we apply it for this chapter?*