

# Acts 12:1-25

## Death of James & Arrest of Peter

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# Die by the sword

*1 Now about that time Herod the king laid hands on some who belonged to the church in order to mistreat them.*

- Herod Agrippa 1
  - Grandson of Herod the Great
  - Ruled over area that included southern Syria, Galilee, and Judea
- James
  - Brother of John, Son of Zebedee (see Matthew 4:21)
  - Put to death with a sword (most likely decapitation)
- Timeline

30	35	Early 44	Aug. 6, 44	Late 44	49
Pentecost	Death of Stephen	Agabus' Prophecy <sup>1</sup>	Death of Herod <sup>2</sup>	Paul & Barnabas in Jerusalem	Jerusalem Council

<sup>1</sup>from end of Ch.11

<sup>2</sup>Date is well-documented

## Do not pass Go

*3 When he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also. Now it was during the days of Unleavened Bread.*

- *When he saw that it pleased the Jews*
  - Herod did have Jewish blood in him
  - Sounds similar to Pontius Pilate in Matthew 27:24
- *He proceeded to arrest Peter*
  - *Now it was during the days of Unleavened Bread*
    - The Romans were in control, but they had to respect the Jewish traditions
    - There would have been many Jews in Jerusalem around this time
  - *Delivering him to four squads<sup>3</sup> of soldiers to guard him*
    - Peter had "escaped" from prison before – see Acts 5:19-21

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<sup>3</sup>quaternions = four soldiers, so 16 total

## It's come to this

*5 So Peter was kept in the prison, but prayer for him was being made fervently by the church to God.*

- *Prayer for him was being made fervently by the church to God*
  - *Fervently* – continually; intensely; earnestly
  - This would appear to be their first option
  - Harkens back to Acts 1:14 & 2:42
  - They prayed for the (at most) seven days Peter was in prison
- *On the very night when Herod was about to bring him forward<sup>4</sup>*
  - *Peter was sleeping<sup>5</sup> between two soldiers, bound with two chains*
  - *Guards in front of the door were watching over the prison*
- *An angel of the Lord suddenly appeared and a light shone in the cell*
  - *He struck Peter's side and woke him up*
  - *"Get up quickly."*
  - *And his chains fell off his hands*

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<sup>4</sup>Why does it seem as though God waits for the last possible moment?

<sup>5</sup>How could he be sleeping knowing James had just been killed?

# Pinch me

*8 And the angel said to him, "Gird yourself and put on your sandals." And he did so. And he said to him, "Wrap your cloak around you and follow me."*

- The angel's instructions
  - *"Gird yourself and put on your sandals."*
  - *"Wrap your cloak around you and follow me."*
- Peter followed without questioning him
  - *They...passed the first and second guard*
  - *The iron gate that leads into the city...opened for them by itself*
- Peter came to himself
  - *He thought he was seeing a vision<sup>6</sup>*
  - *"Now I know for sure that the Lord has sent forth His angel and rescued me..."*
- Why was James killed and Peter spared? And why was Paul in prison for a longer time?

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<sup>6</sup>Just as with Cornelius

## Peter? Peter's not here

*12 And when he realized this, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John who was also called Mark, where many were gathered together and were praying.*

- *[Peter] went to the house of Mary, the mother of John who was also called Mark*
  - First mention of John Mark
  - Why were the people gathered here?
    - And why did Peter think to go there first?
- *A servant-girl named Rhoda came to answer*
  - *She did not open the gate, but ran in and announced that Peter was standing in front of the gate*
- *They said to her, "You are out of your mind!"*
  - My paraphrase: "How can Peter be out of jail when we are praying for him to get out of jail?"

## We weren't expecting that

15 *They said to her, "You are out of your mind!" But she kept insisting that it was so. They kept saying, "It is his angel."*

- *You are out of your mind!* = You are raving mad!<sup>7</sup>
  - *She kept insisting that it was so*
  - *They kept saying, "It is his angel."*
- Did they not believe that God would answer their prayer?
  - Or did God answer their prayer in a manner they did not expect?
- *But Peter continued knocking; and when they had opened the door, they saw him and were amazed*
  - *But motioning to them with his hand to be silent*
  - *He described to them how the Lord had led him out of the prison*
  - *He said, "Report these things to James<sup>8</sup> and the brethren."<sup>9</sup>*

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<sup>7</sup>Wuest

<sup>8</sup>Half-brother of Jesus; author of the epistle

<sup>9</sup>Why?

## Where'd he go?

*18 Now when day came, there was no small disturbance among the soldiers as to what could have become of Peter.*

- *There was no small disturbance among the soldiers*<sup>10</sup>
  - The soldiers would be given the same penalty of the escaped prisoner
  - See also Acts 16:27
- *When Herod had searched for him and had not found him*
  - Where was he looking for Peter?
  - Why was he not able to find him?
- *He examined the guards and ordered that they be led away to execution*
  - This was appropriate under Roman law (see above)

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<sup>10</sup>That's putting it lightly



## Politics not as usual

*20 Now he was very angry with the people of Tyre and Sidon; and with one accord they came to him, and having won over Blastus the kings chamberlain, they were asking for peace, because their country was fed by the kings country.*

- *Now he was very angry with the people of Tyre and Sidon*
  - No reason given for this – maybe Herod was just temperamental<sup>11</sup>
- *They came to him...asking for peace*
  - *Having won over Blastus the kings chamberlain*<sup>12</sup>
  - *Because their country was fed by the kings country*
- *On an appointed day Herod...began delivering an address to them*
  - *Having put on his royal apparel*
    - Silver robes that glittered in the sunlight
  - *Took his seat on the rostrum*
- *The people kept crying out, “The voice of a god and not of a man!”*

<sup>11</sup>Rather typical of a Roman leader

<sup>12</sup>It's who you know

## To dust you shall return

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

- *Immediately an angel of the Lord struck him*
  - Plenty of precedent for such a divine action throughout the Bible
  - See also Ananias and Sapphira, Acts 5:1-11
- *Because he did not give God the glory*
  - What does this say about God's kingship?
  - What does this say about God's expectations for political leaders?<sup>13</sup>
- *And he was eaten by worms and died*
  - Josephus records this event
    - Describes a stomach ache for which Herod had to be carried out
    - He states that Herod died five days later, on August 6, 44

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<sup>13</sup>and are these the wrong questions?

## Can't hold us back

*24 But the word of the Lord continued to grow and to be multiplied.*

- *But the word of the Lord continued to grow and to be multiplied*
  - Normal pattern: Persecution → growth of God's church
  - Often in Acts involves divine intervention
- *And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem when they had fulfilled their mission*
  - There mission was bringing food, as discussed in Chapter 11
- *Taking along with them John, who was also called Mark*
  - Apparently, John Mark had become a prominent person within the church
  - He was Barnabas' cousin (see Colossians 4:10)
  - We are going to see more of him later.