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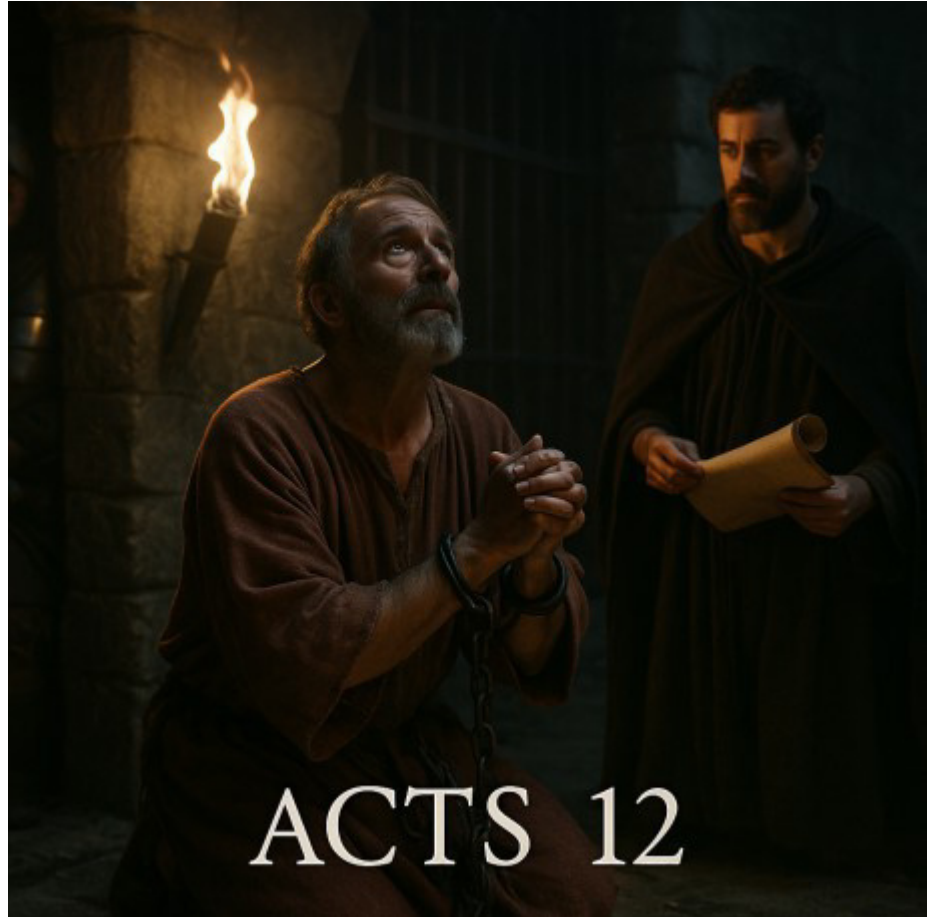
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Acts 12 This study has not been posted on facebook yet



By Dan Maines

Acts 12

Acts 12:1-2

Now about that time Herod the king laid hands on some who belonged to the church, to do them harm. And he had James the brother of John executed with a sword.

† This Herod was Herod Agrippa I, grandson of Herod the Great. His execution of James marked the first apostolic martyrdom.

† Josephus (Antiquities 19.7.2) confirms Agrippa's reign and his

harshness toward those seen as threats.

Acts 12:3-4

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 had arrested him, he also put him in prison, handing him over to four squads of soldiers to guard him, intending after the Passover to bring him before the people.

† Agrippa sought favor with the Jewish leaders by persecuting Christians. Peter's arrest during Passover echoed Jesus' own arrest at the same feast.

† Josephus records Agrippa's zeal for Jewish customs (Antiquities 19.7.3).

Acts 12:5

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

† The church responded with prayer, showing reliance on God rather than force.

Acts 12:6-7

On the very night when Herod was about to bring him forward, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and guards in front of the door were watching over the prison. And behold, an angel of the Lord suddenly stood near him, and a light shone in the cell; and he struck Peter's side and woke him, saying, "Get up quickly." And his chains fell off his hands.

† God intervened at the last moment. Peter's calm sleep showed trust in God's sovereignty.

† The Dead Sea Scrolls (1QM 13.10) describe angels as God's agents of deliverance, reflecting Jewish expectation of angelic intervention.

Acts 12:8-10

And the angel said to him, "Put on your belt and strap on your sandals." And he did so. And he said to him, "Wrap your cloak around you and follow me." And he went out and continued to follow, and yet he did not know that what was being done by the angel was real, but thought he was seeing a vision. Now when they had passed the first and second guard, they came to the iron gate that leads into the city, which opened for them by itself; and they went out and went along one street, and immediately the angel departed from him.

† The iron gate opened of its own accord, showing God's power over Roman might. Peter thought it was a vision until he was outside.

Acts 12:11

When Peter came to himself, he said, "Now I truly understand that the Lord has sent His angel, and rescued me from the hand of Herod and from all that the Jewish people expected."

† Peter acknowledged God's deliverance, not chance or human intervention.

Acts 12:12-15

And when he realized this, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John who was called Mark, where many were gathered together and were praying. When he knocked at the door of the gate, a slave woman named Rhoda came to answer. When she recognized Peter's voice, because of her joy 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!" But she kept insisting that it was so. They said, "It is his angel."

† The church prayed but struggled to believe their prayer was answered. Their reaction shows God's power exceeded their

expectations.

Acts 12:16-17

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. And he said, "Report these things to James and the brothers." Then he left and went to another place.

† Peter testified of God's deliverance and instructed that the news be shared. He then went into hiding to avoid further danger.

Acts 12:18-19

Now when day came, there was no small disturbance among the soldiers over what had become of Peter. And when Herod had looked for him and had not found him, he examined the guards and ordered that they be led away to execution. Then he went down from Judea to Caesarea and was spending time there.

† Roman law required guards to suffer the penalty of escaped prisoners (compare Acts 16:27). The execution of the soldiers reflected Roman severity.

Acts 12:20-22

Now he was very angry with the people of Tyre and Sidon; and with one mind they came to him, and having won over Blastus the king's chamberlain, they were pleading for peace, because their country was supported with food from the king's country. On an appointed day, after putting on his royal apparel, Herod took his seat on the rostrum and began delivering an address to them. The people repeatedly cried out, "The voice of a god and not of a man!"

† Herod Agrippa received divine honors. Josephus (Antiquities 19.8.2) describes the same scene, noting his robe was made of silver and shone brilliantly in the sun, causing the people to hail him as a god.

Acts 12:23

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.

† Divine judgment fell swiftly on Agrippa. Josephus corroborates this event, stating Agrippa was seized with violent stomach pains and died five days later.

Acts 12:24-25

But the word of the Lord continued to grow and to be multiplied. And Barnabas and Saul returned when they had fulfilled their mission to Jerusalem, taking along with them John, who was also called Mark.

† Despite Herod's opposition, the word of God grew. The transition now turns to Barnabas, Saul, and John Mark, setting the stage for missionary expansion.

How it applies to us today

† God's sovereignty over rulers is absolute. Herod opposed the church, but God struck him down.

† The church must rely on prayer in persecution, even when answers seem impossible.

† God can open any gate and deliver His people, reminding us not to fear man's power.

† The kingdom of God multiplies despite opposition, because its growth depends on God, not men.

† This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies †

Source Index

† Josephus, Antiquities 19.7.2 – Agrippa's reign and severity

† Josephus, Antiquities 19.7.3 – Agrippa's zeal for Jewish customs

† Dead Sea Scrolls, 1QM 13.10 – Angels as agents of deliverance

† Josephus, Antiquities 19.8.2 – Agrippa's silver robe and deification

† Josephus, Antiquities 19.8.2 – Agrippa's death by sudden illness

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