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Acts 12

The relief for the famine had gone out to the church of Jerusalem but the persecution that began by Saul of Tarsus against the church was now brought forth by Herod as he kills James with the sword and takes Peter in captive

12:1-6 The persecution of the church by Herod

12:1 The time of the persecution.

1) The phrase “about that time” indicates the time of the famine in the closing of the previous chapter, 43-44 A.D. ,which preceded the persecution.

* The word time “kairos” confirms this indicating a period or segment, the famine.

2) The person bringing about the persecution is clearly named, Herod, but there are many.

a) Herod is Herod Agrippa I, grandson of Herod the Great who murdered the infants at the birth of Jesus.

* He was the son of Herod Aristobulus.

b) Herod the Great, killed the infants during after the birth of Jesus.

c) Herod Antipas, killed John the Baptist.

c) Herod Agrippa I, killed James, he had obtained the title of king in 34 A.D.

d) Herod Agrippa II- heard Paul’s case at Caesarea.

* They were all descendants of Esau, Edomites, a type of the flesh.

3) Herod is said to harass “kokoo” to oppress, afflict, distress or maltreat.

a) This was the second major persecution.

b) The first came through Saul. Acts 8:1

12:2 The extent of the persecution.

1) Herod killed James the brother of John.

a) They were known as the sons of thunder. Mk. 3:17

b) They petitioned Jesus for the right hand and the left hand in His glory. Mk. 10:35-45

c) Jesus prophesied of his death. Matt. 20:22-23; Mk.10:39

2) Herod killed him with the sword.

a) James was the second martyr recorded and may of spoken out against Herod, declaring Jesus the true king.

b) The first being Stephen. Acts 7:58-60

c) James was delivered by God from this sinful world.

* The dative shows James was beheaded, Lenski says.

- d) John was left to record the book of Revelation, after being, after being boiled in oil, according to tradition and sent to the Island of Patmos. Rev. 1:9

12:3 The arrest of Peter in the persecution

- 1) Herod saw that it pleased the Jews, this was his motive.
- 2) Herod proceeded to seize Peter also.
 - * The word seized “sullamboano” is the same word used of Jesus’ arrest at Gathsemane. Lk. 22:54
- 3) Herod did this during the days of Unleaven Bread, 15-22 of April.

12:4 The confinement of Peter.

four squads-

- 1) Peter was place in prison with four groups of four soldiers.
 - a) Four per watch, six hours each.
 - b) Without doubt in the Anonia Fortress.
- 2) Peter was going to be executed Peter after Passover, which means, at the end of the Unleaven feast, being unlawful during it.
 - a) The KJV has Easter which is wrong and only appears once.
 - b) Easter comes from the worship of Astarte, the goddess of fertility.
 - c) Tammuz was her son who was said to of been resurrected forty days after

being killed by a wild bore from which “Lent” comes from and was celebrated with colored eggs.

12:5-6 The protection of Peter.

- 1) Peter was guarded in prison. vs. 5a
 - * Peter had been in prison under the Sanhedrin. Acts 4:3; 5:18
- 2) Prayer was being offered to God constantly for Peter. vs. 5b
 - a) The prayer of the church was not what delivered Peter, for the were praying without believing. vs. 15
 - * The imperfect tense implies they were making repeated prayer, earnest but as we will see not believing!
 - b) God protected Peter.
 - c) Yet prayer is a key theme in Acts.
 - * Jer. 29:13; Eph. 6:12, 18
- 3) The perfect timing of God, about that time Herod was about to bring Peter out of prison to execute him. vs. 6a
 - * The imperfect “was about” describes the critical hour, God is always right on time!
- 2) The perfect peace of Peter was evident by the fact that he was sleeping, while being chained between two soldiers. vs. 6b

* The reason being, Jesus had prophesied that Peter would die at an old age. Jn. 21:18

3) The perfect guard of Herod would fail, two soldiers were chained to Peter and two at the door. vs. 6c

* The purposes of God can not be thwarted by man!

12:7-19 The deliverance of Peter by an angel from Herod's prison.

12:7-8 The arrival of the angel.

1) The angel suddenly stood by Peter, the word behold implies surprise. vs. 7a-b

2) The angel light of his presence lit the prison. vs. 7c

a) Yet the soldiers were not conscious of his presence, weather blinded or put in a slumber.

b) It is hard to believe they were sleeping, since these Roman knew they would pay with their own lives!

3) The angel had to awaken Peter by striking him on the side and raise him up. vs. 7d

* Again Peter is sleeping like a baby, so much that the angel has to strike Peter hard to awaken him!

4) The angel commanded Peter to arise quickly. vs. 7e-f

* An angel had delivered them before. Acts 5:19

5) The chains on Peter fell off his hands. vs. 7g

* Two soldiers were chained to Peter, another evidence of divine rescuing!

6) The angel gave Peter a second command, "Gird yourself and tie on your sandals", and so he did. vs. 8a-c

7) The angel gave Peter a third command, "Put on your garment and follow me." vs. 8d-e

* He was a messenger to an heir of salvation. Heb.1:14

12:9-11 The angel led Peter out of the cell to freedom.

1) Peter was confused, not knowing if it was real or perhaps he was having a vision. vs. 9

* Much like he had experience at Joppa, regarding Cornelius. Acts 10

2) Peter was led all the way out to the street. vs. 10

a) They both went past the first and the second guard posts. vs. 10a

b) They came to the iron gate that led to the city and it opened to them of its own accord. vs. 10b-c

- c) They went out and went down one street, and immediately the angel departed from him. vs. 10d-e
- 3) Peter became keenly aware God had delivered him. vs. 11
 - a) Peter at once came to his senses, realizing the event was real. vs. 11a
 - b) Peter perceived with his own eyes his divine deliverance, “Now I know for certain that the Lord has sent His angel.” vs. 11b-c
 - c) Peter acknowledge the divine benefit, “And has delivered me from the hand of Herod and from all the expectation of the Jewish people.” vs. 11d

12:12-17 The flight of Peter from Jerusalem.

- 1) Peter comprehending what had happened went directly to the house of Mary. vs. 12a-c
 - a) The word considered “suneido” means to comprehend, understand, found two times, Acts 14:6
 - b) Perhaps this was one of the meeting places of the church, being ample in size.
- 2) Mary was the mother of John Mark. vs. 12d
 - a) She was the sister of Barnabas, uncle to John-Mark.

- b) Paul and Barnabas had come to Jerusalem to deliver relief in the period but nothing is said of their presence at the meeting. Acts 11:30
- 3) There were gathered many to pray, without doubt praying for Peter. vs. 12e
- 4) Peter knocked at the door of the gate and a girl named Rhoda came to answer. vs. 13
 - * The house was large having a patio.
- 5) Rhoda, whose name means Rose, was so exited at seeing Peter that she ran back to tell all of his presence and left him standing at the gate. vs. 14
- 6) The response of those praying was that she was crazy, continuing to insist, she said it was his angel. vs. 15
 - a) They were praying without faith, yet God delivered Peter, thank God He is sovereign.
 - b) The simply wanted to appease Rhoda and said it was his angel “aggelos”, so some teach that all have a guarding angel.
 - c) This is an accurate statement of what they said, but it does not mean that it is Biblical truth as doctrine, a bit out of context!
- 7) Peter became a bit desperate and continued to knock, opening the door, they were astonished “existemi”. vs. 16

- 8) Peter told them, all that had happened. vs. 17
- a) But motioning to them with his hand to keep silent.” vs. 17a
- 1)) The word But marks the sharp contrast between Peter and the people.
- 2)) Peter motioned to keeping it down, he feared to be taken again!
- b) Peter declared to them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. vs. 17b
- * James was the Lord’s half brother and the leading elder at Jerusalem. Acts 15:13-21; 21:18; 1Cor.15:7; Gal.1:19; 2:9, 12
- c) Peter told them to related the information to James and to the brethren. vs. 17c-d
- d) Peter departed and went to another place. vs. 17e
- a) Peter departed, probably it is 44 A.D and years later will appears only one other time at the First Church Council. Acts 15:7
- b) The first twelve chapters Peter was the central figure and Jerusalem the Church center.
- c) The last sixteen, Paul is the central figure in chapter 13-28.

- d) The city of Antioch became the center for missions.

- 12:18-19** The frightful surprise of the soldiers.
- 1) In the morning there was panic among the soldiers, being bewildered as to the whereabouts of Peter. vs. 18
- 2) In the soldiers were executed for their failure to keep Peer. vs. 19
- a) The sharp contrast between the soldiers and Herod is evident by the word “But”.
- b) Herod had searched for Peter and did not find him. vs.. 19a
- c) Herod himself examined the guards and commanded that they be put to death. vs. 19b
- d) Herod then went down from Judea to Caesarea, and stayed there. vs. 19c
- * This was the place of Roman administration.

12:20-23 The judgment of God upon Herod. death of Herod recorded.

- 12:20** The time was during a commercial and political meeting.
- 1) Herod had been out of sorts with the people of Tyre and Sidon, belonging to Syria

- 2) Herod was approached by them with a mediator, Blastus, Herod the king's person aide, who was their friend. vs. 20b-c
- 3) Herod was petitioned for peace. vs. 20d
- 4) the reason given was they were dependent of Herod for food and water.

12:21-22 The pride of Herod went a bit too far. and pomp accepted praise of divinity.

- 1) So on a set day Herod at a scheduled day presented himself, arrayed in royal apparel, sat on his throne and gave an oration to them. vs. 21
 - a) A political speech which, I am sure as in our day was full of platitudes and empty words.
 - b) Probably in the very theatre we have visited at Caesarea.
- 2) The people also played their political hypocritical part, they kept shouting, "The voice of a god and not of a man!" vs. 22
- 3) Then immediately an angel of the Lord struck him, because he did not give glory to God. And he was eaten by worms and died. vs. 23
 - a) Josephus records his painful death that lasted five days.
 - b) He ordered the leaders of Jerusalem to be imprisoned and be put to death the

moment he died so that there would be someone mourning at his death.

12:24-25 The outcome of the persecution of Herod on the church.

- 1) But the word grew and multiplied. vs. 24
 - a) This another summary statements that are given periodically, so that we understand that the gates of hell can not prevail against the church. Matt. 16:18
 - b) The word "but" stands again in sharp contrast to the persecution of Herod.
 - c) The greatest security by Rome could not complete with one of God's angels to deliver Peter.
 - d) The death of James was not against God's allowance.
 - e) The person or nation that fights against God will always lose!

12:25 The return of Barnabas and Saul to Antioch.

- 1) Paul and Barnabas returned to Antioch from Jerusalem, after they finished delivering the financial help to relieve the famine prophesied by Agabus in 43 A.D. vs. 25a
 - * This is recorded in the previous chapter. Acts 11:27-30

- 2) They had brought John-Mark with them to Antioch. vs. 25b
- a) The Holy Spirit ties it all together. Peter's deliverance going to John-Mark's mothers house, Barnabas and Saul were at Jerusalem and now John Mark is with them, 43-44 A.D.
 - b) There is a five year gap between this verse and the first verse of chapter 13, 49 A.D.