

ACTS CHAPTER 12

THIS SECTION OF ACTS IS GOING TO CONFIRM ISRAEL'S REJECTION OF THE MESSIAH. THIS ANIMOSITY OF ISRAEL SETS THE STAGE FOR THE FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY.

THIS IS OUR FINAL MAJOR DISCUSSION OF THE CHURCH IN JERUSALEM. IT HAS THREE PARTS:

1. THE MARTYRDOM OF JAMES, BROTHER OF JOHN, ALONG WITH THE ARREST OF PETER.
2. PETER'S MIRACULOUS DELIVERY FROM PRISON. IT IS TOLD IN 2 PARTS:
 - A. PETER'S ESCAPE
 - B. SURPRISING ARRIVAL AT THE HOME OF JOHN MARK'S MOTHER.
3. HEROD'S ARROGANCE AND JUDGMENT.

1. THE MARTYRDOM OF JAMES- VS 1-2.

VS 1 WHAT IS THE TIME PHRASE _____ WHAT IS IT REFERRING TO? WHAT IS HAPPENING TO THE CHURCH? _____ WHO IS DOING THE ACTION? _____ THE HEROD MENTIONED HERE IS AGRIPPA I, A RULER POPULAR WITH THE JEWS FOR HE WAS PARTLY JEWISH. HE WAS KNOWN FOR DOING EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO GAIN THE FAVOR OF THE JEWS. HE FOUND IT POLITICALLY CORRECT TO ARREST CHRISTIANS AND TO EXECUTE JAMES, THE BROTHER OF JOHN. THIS EVIL MAN WAS THE GRANDSON OF HEROD THE GREAT, WHO ORDERED THE BETHLEHEM CHILDREN TO BE MURDERED, AND THE NEPHEW OF HEROD ANTIPAS, WHO HAD JOHN THE BAPTIST BEHEADED.

VS 2 NOW THAT THE GENTILES WERE OPENLY A PART OF THE CHURCH, HEROD'S PLAN WAS EVEN MORE AGREEABLE TO THE NATIONALISTIC JEWS WHO HAD NO PLACE FOR "PAGANS". WHAT DOES HEROD DO IN THIS VERSE? _____ HE WAS THE FIRST OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES TO BE KILLED AND THE ONLY ONE WHOSE MARTYRDOM IS MENTIONED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT. HE IS THE SECOND MARTYR IN ACTS. REMEMBER THE FIRST MARTYR? _____ JAMES IS NEVER MENTIONED APART FROM HIS BROTHER JOHN IN THE NEW TESTAMENT, EVEN AT HIS DEATH; JAMES IS ALWAYS MENTIONED FIRST, PROBABLY BECAUSE HE WAS THE OLDER.

LOOK AT MATTHEW 20:20-23 **20** Then the mother of the [a]sons of Zebedee came to [b]Jesus with her sons, bowing down and making a request of Him. **21** And He said to her, "What do you desire?" She *said to Him, "Say that in Your kingdom these two sons of mine shall sit, one at Your right, and one at Your left." **22** But Jesus replied, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?" They *said to Him, "We are able." **23** He *said to them, "My cup you shall drink; but to sit at My right and at My left is not Mine to give, but *it is for those* for whom it has been prepared by My Father."

JAMES WAS ARRESTED AND KILLED, AND JOHN BECAME AN EXILE ON THE ISLE OF PATMOS, A PRISONER OF ROME. DO YOU THINK THEY LEARNED WHAT JESUS WAS TELLING THEM? THERE IS A COST TO FOLLOW JESUS. ARE YOU WILLING TO PAY THAT COST?

VS 3 WHAT DOES HEROD SEE? _____
IF IT PLEASED THE JEWS WHEN JAMES WAS KILLED, JUST THINK HOW DELIGHTED THEY WOULD BE IF PETER WERE SLAIN. WHAT DOES HEROD DO? _____
FOR AT LEAST TWO REASONS HEROD WOULD FIND IT EXPEDIENT TO EXECUTE PETER. FIRST, PETER WAS KNOWN AS THE LEADER OF THE CHURCH, AND SECOND, HE HAD FRATERNIZED WITH GENTILES. WHAT IS THE TIME PERIOD? _____
THIS SEVEN DAY SPRING FEAST FOLLOWED IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE PASSOVER. THE "PASSOVER" REFERRED TO HERE COMBINED AN EIGHT-DAY FESTIVAL, THE PASSOVER ITSELF FOLLOWED BY THE SEVEN DAYS OF UNLEAVENED BREAD. THIS IS THE VERY SAME SEASON OF THE YEAR DURING WHICH JESUS WAS EXECUTED (LUKE 22:1)

VS 4 WHAT HAPPENS? 1. _____ 2. _____
3. _____ SIXTEEN SOLDIERS, FOUR FOR EACH WATCH, KEPT GUARD OVER THE APOSTLE, WITH TWO CHAINED TO THE PRISONER AND TWO WATCHING THE DOORS. THEIR WATCH WOULD CHANGE EVERY THREE HOURS IN THE NIGHT TO GUARANTEE THEY WERE ALERT. 4. _____
THE LEADERSHIP'S HARDENING AND PERSISTENT USE OF VIOLENT TACTICS IS CREATING DISTANCE BETWEEN ISRAEL AND THOSE CALLING THE NATION TO RESPOND TO THE MESSIAH. THE PLAN PROBABLY IS TO BRING PETER BEFORE THE PEOPLE AFTER THE HOLIDAY TO FACE JUDGMENT AND BE EXECUTED. WHAT HAD PETER DONE? WHY WERE THEY GOING TO EXECUTE HIM?

VS 5 WHILE PETER IS IN PRISON, WHAT IS THE CHURCH DOING? _____
HOW? _____ THE PHRASE "BUT PRAYER" IS THE TURNING POINT IN THE STORY. WE MUST NEVER UNDERESTIMATE THE POWER OF PRAYER! THE PURITAN PREACHER THOMAS WATSON SAID, " THE ANGEL FETCHED PETER OUT OF PRISON BUT IT WAS PRAYER THAT FETCHED THE ANGEL."

VS 6 HOW COULD PETER SLEEP IN PRISON KNOWING HE WAS GOING TO BE SENTENCED TO DEATH? LOOK AT JOHN 21:18-19 **18** Truly, truly I tell you, when you were younger, you used to put on your belt and walk wherever you wanted; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands and someone else will put your belt on you, and bring you where you do not want to go." **19** Now He said this, indicating by what kind of death he would glorify God. And when He had said this, He *said to him, "Follow Me!" _____ DO YOU BELIEVE GOD'S PROMISES? IS YOUR FAITH AS GREAT AS PETER'S?

VS 7 AT THE LAST MOMENT, THE NIGHT BEFORE PETER IS TO APPEAR FOR JUDGMENT, WHAT DOES THE LORD DO? _____ THIS IS THE SECOND TIME AN ANGEL HAS HELPED PETER ESCAPE. (ACTS 5:17-20) WE WILL SEE ONE MORE PRISON RESCUE IN ACTS 16:23-29. THE ANGEL BROUGHT LIGHT AND LIBERTY INTO THE PRISON CELL, BUT THE GUARDS HAD NO IDEA THAT ANYTHING WAS GOING ON. HOW DID THE ANGEL APPEAR? _____

WHAT HAPPENED IN THE CELL WHEN THE ANGEL APPEARED? _____
WHAT DOES THE ANGEL DO? 1. _____ AND 2. _____
3. _____ AND 4. _____

VS 8 IF PETER WAS GOING TO BE DELIVERED, HE HAD TO OBEY WHAT THE ANGEL COMMANDED. GOD ALONE CAN DO THE EXTRAORDINARY, BUT WE MUST DO THE ORDINARY. WHAT ARE THE ANGEL'S INSTRUCTIONS TO PETER? 1. _____
2. _____ THE ANGEL COULD HAVE PUT THE SHOES ON PETER'S FEET, BUT HE TOLD PETER TO DO IT. FROM THAT NIGHT ON EVERY TIME PETER PUT ON HIS SHOES, IT MUST HAVE REMINDED HIM OF THE PRISON MIRACLE AND ENCOURAGE HIM TO TRUST THE LORD. 3. _____ AND 4. _____
_____ THESE WERE CERTAINLY ORDINARY TASKS TO DO WHILE A MIRACLE IS TAKING PLACE. BUT GOD OFTEN JOINS THE MIRACULOUS WITH THE ORDINARY JUST TO ENCOURAGE US TO KEEP IN BALANCE. JESUS MULTIPLIED THE LOAVES AND FISHES, BUT HIS DISCIPLES GATHERED UP THE LEFTOVERS. JESUS RAISED LAZARUS FROM THE DEAD, BUT THE MEN HAD TO ROLL THE STONE FROM THE TOMB. WE ALL HAVE A PART TO PLAY IN GOD'S PLAN. IS THAT AN ENCOURAGEMENT TO YOU?

VS 9 WAS PETER OBEDIENT? DID PETER UNDERSTAND WHAT WAS HAPPENING? WHAT DOES THAT TELL US ABOUT OUR WALK WITH THE LORD?

VS 10 WHEN THE GATE TO THE CITY OPENED, THEY ARE OUT ON THE STREET. HAVING SET PETER FREE, WHAT DOES THE ANGEL DO? _____

VS 11 WHAT DOES PETER REALIZE? 1. _____
2. _____ 3. _____
PETER RECOGNIZES THAT THE RESCUE IS THE LORD'S PROTECTION OF HIM FROM HEROD AND ALL THE EXPECTATIONS OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE. BOTH POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS LEADERS ARE SINGLED OUT AS PETER'S OPPONENTS. HE NOW KNEW THIS WAS NO VISION.

VS 12 THIS VERSE INTRODUCES US TO JOHN MARK WHO FIGURES PROMINENTLY IN PAUL'S FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY. EVIDENTLY HIS MOTHER WAS A WOMAN OF PROMINENCE AND MEANS. PROBABLY HER HOUSE WAS A PRINCIPAL MEETING PLACE OF THE CHURCH. BECAUSE JOHN MARK'S FATHER IS NOT NAMED, MARY MAY HAVE BEEN A WIDOW. THIS SAME MARK IS CONSIDERED TO BE THE WRITER OF THE GOSPEL BEARING HIS NAME. WHAT WAS HAPPENING AT MARY'S HOUSE?

VS 13-14 WHEN WE REMEMBER THAT MANY PEOPLE WERE PRAYING, THEY WERE PRAYING EARNESTLY, THEY HAD PRAYED NIGHT AND DAY FOR PERHAPS AS LONG AS A WEEK, AND THAT THEIR PRAYERS CENTERED SPECIFICALLY ON PETER'S DELIVERANCE THE SCENE HERE IS ALMOST COMICAL. MAYBE THEY DID NOT EXPECT AN ANSWER TO THEIR PRAYERS SO SOON? SO WHAT HAPPENS WHEN HE KNOCKS ON THE DOOR? WHAT DOES RHODA RECOGNIZE? BUT WHAT DOES SHE DO?

VS 15 HOW DO THE PEOPLE REACT? WHAT DID THEY DEDUCE? _____.
_____. "IT IS HIS ANGEL" REVEALS THEIR BELIEF IN "GUARDIAN ANGELS" (MATT 18:10/HEBREWS 1:14.) IT MAY ALSO IMPLY A BELIEF THAT AN ANGEL MAY LOOK LIKE THE PERSON WITH WHOM HE IS IDENTIFIED.

VS 16 DID PETER GIVE UP? HOW DID THEY REACT?

VS 17 APPARENTLY EVERYBODY BEGAN TO SPEAK AT ONCE AND PETER SILENCED THEM, NO DOUBT BECAUSE OF THE REACTION HIS ARRIVAL HAS CAUSED. WHO DOES HE GIVE THE GLORY TO? WHAT DOES HE ASK THEM TO DO? _____
_____. PETER'S MENTION OF JAMES INDICATES THAT JAMES HAD A PLACE OF PROMINENCE IN THE JERUSALEM CHURCH. JAMES IS THE HALF BROTHER OF THE LORD, THE LEADER OF THE JERUSALEM ASSEMBLY. (MATT 13:55; ACTS 15:13; GAL 1:19). HE WOULD BE MARTYRED IN AD 62, SLAIN BY ANNAS II. WHERE DID PETER GO? _____ PETER MOVES OUT OF JERUSALEM TO AVOID DANGER. WHERE PETER WENT IS NEVER GIVEN. FIRST CORINTHIANS 9:5 TELLS US THAT PETER TRAVELED IN MINISTRY WITH HIS WIFE AND FIRST CORINTHIANS 1:12 SUGGESTS HE VISITED CORINTH. EXCEPT FOR A BRIEF APPEARANCE IN ACTS 15 BACK IN JERUSALEM, PETER WALKS OFF THE PAGES OF THE BOOK OF ACTS TO MAKE ROOM FOR PAUL AND HIS MINISTRY TO THE GENTILES.

VS 18-19 THE NARRATIVE NOW TURNS TO A SCENE THAT HAS THAT MODERN FEEL OF "MEANWHILE, BACK AT THE RANCH" IN A TELEVISION SHOW. WHAT HAPPENS? AFTER PUTTING FOUR OR MORE SOLDIERS TO DEATH (VS 4) , WHAT DOES HEROD DO?

VS 20 TYRE AND SIDON WERE IN HEROD'S DOMINION AND FOR SOME REASON HAD INCURRED HIS WRATH. BECAUSE THESE CITIES DEPENDED ON GALILEE FOR GRAIN, THEY DESIRED TO MAKE PEACE WITH HEROD.

VS 21 THE JEWISH HISTORIAN JOSEPHUS SAID THAT THIS SCENE TOOK PLACE DURING A FESTIVAL HONORING CLAUDIUS CAESAR, AND THAT THE KING WORE A BEAUTIFUL SILVER GARMENT IN HONOR OF THE OCCASION. WE DO NOT KNOW WHAT THE KING SAID IN HIS SPEECH BUT WE KNOW HE WANTED TO IMPRESS THE PEOPLE.

VS 22 DID HE IMPRESS THE PEOPLE? WHAT HAPPENS? HOW DO YOU THINK HEROD RESPONDED?

VS 23 WHAT IS THE TIME PHRASE? _____. WHY DID THE LORD STRIKE HEROD? "I AM THE LORD: THAT IS MY NAME: AND MY GLORY WILL I NOT GIVE TO ANOTHER" (ISA 42:8.) INSTEAD OF PETER BEING KILLED BY HEROD, IT WAS HEROD WHO WAS KILLED BY PETER'S GOD! HEROD CONTRACTED SOME AFFLICTION TO HIS BOWELS AND DIED FIVE DAYS LATER, ACCORDING TO JOSEPHUS. THIS WAS IN AD 44.

VS 24 HEROD WAS EATEN BY WORMS AND DIED, BUT WHAT WAS THE LORD DOING?

AT THE BEGINNING OF THIS CHAPTER , HEROD SEEMED TO BE IN CONTROL AND THE CHURCH WAS LOSING THE BATTLE. BUT AT THE END OF THE CHAPTER, HEROD IS DEAD AND THE CHURCH IS GROWING RAPIDLY. WHY DO YOU THINK THIS WAS HAPPENING? THIS IS A PRAYING CHURCH. "GOD WORKS WHEN CHURCHES PRAY, AND SATAN STILL TREMBLES WHEN HE SEES THE WEAKEST SAINT UPON HIS KNEES." WIERSBE

WITH THIS PROGRESS REPORT LUKE BROUGHT ANOTHER SECTION OF HIS WORK TO A CLOSE. FROM ANTIOCH (VS 11)THE GOSPEL MESSAGE WAS NOW READY TO GO TO ASIA MINOR.

VS 25 DO YOU REMEMBER WHAT MISSION BARNABAS AND SAUL HAD COMPLETED?

_____. THEY RETURNED TO _____

WHO DO THEY TAKE WITH THEM.

THIS BRIEF UNIT- VERSES 24-25 PERFORM THREE ROLES AS A SUMMARY .

1. CONCLUDES LUKE'S FOCUS ON THE CHURCH IN JERUSALEM, SETTING UP THE TRANSITION TO THE CHURCH IN ANTIOCH.
2. IT CONNECTS US BACK TO THE MISSION THAT CONCLUDED ACTS 11, WHICH IS THE LINK BETWEEN JERUSALEM AND ANTIOCH.
3. IT SHIFTS ATTENTION FROM PETER TO BARNABAS AND SAUL.

NOW LUKE CAN GIVE RENEWED ATTENTION TO WHAT THE CHURCH IN ANTIOCH IS DOING.