



1. James, the brother of John, was the first of Jesus' 12 original disciples to be martyred. What do you remember about James from the gospels? What are your thoughts on why the Lord allowed James to be put to death so soon?
2. What big event in Jerusalem kept Herod from killing Peter right away? What was Herod's plan for Peter? (verses 3-4)
3. Describe several miraculous events that took place during Peter's escape from prison (verses 6-10). What did Peter conclude right after all this took place (11)? How does all this show the sovereignty of God over earthly rulers?
4. What role did the church have in all of this? (5, 12) What does that say to your heart?
5. What do you find humorous in verses 13-17? Have you ever had a similar reaction to something the Lord did in your life? Tell the group about it.
6. What can we learn about watching for answers to prayer from this story about Peter's escape?
7. Considering what happened to James and Peter, and what Herod does to the soldiers (18-19), how would you answer the question, "Is life always fair?" Can you share a time when life was not very fair to you? How did you get through it?
8. Why was there a problem with what Herod did during his speech to the political visitors from Tyre and Sidon? (21-23) How did an angel of the Lord respond, and what happened to King Herod as a result? Do you think verse 23 could also be a response to verse 2?
9. With all of this going on around the church, describe in your own words what happened in verse 24. What does this teach us about our response to difficult situations today?
10. Some believers are concerned about the increasing persecution of Christians in today's world. How does what happened to James and Peter give you hope in spite of that?



God Wins!

Leader Notes for Acts 12:1-24

This chapter starts on a sad note, with some in the church mistreated and the apostle James put to death. James was one of the three disciples closest to the Lord Jesus. Those three went in with Jesus when He raised a girl from the dead (Luke 8:51), when He was transfigured (Luke 9:28), and at the garden of Gethsemane (Mark 14:33). But James and his brother John also wanted to call down fire from heaven on some Samaritans (Luke 8:54) and asked Jesus if they could sit on his right and left in glory (Mark 10:35). This James is not mentioned elsewhere in Acts, except in the list of disciples in 1:13.

We read several times about “King Herod” in the New Testament, but there are actually four different men who had this title in the gospels and Acts:

- Herod the Great, ruler when Jesus was born. He tried to trick the wise men, but then put the baby boys of Bethlehem to death (Matthew 2). He died shortly after that in 4 BC.
- Herod Antipas, son of Herod the Great, ruler during Jesus’ ministry (“that fox” – Luke 13:32). He killed John the Baptist and presided over one of Jesus’ trials. He was also known as Herod the tetrarch, mentioned in Acts 13. He died in AD 39, before the events of Acts 12 took place.
- Herod Agrippa, grandson of Herod the Great and nephew of Herod Antipas, ruler from AD 37-44. Responsible for the death of James in Acts 12, he died shortly thereafter in AD 44.
- Herod Agrippa II, called King Agrippa in Acts 25-26, ruler starting in AD 50. He was the son of Agrippa 1 and only 16 when his father died. He is best known for the statement he made to the apostle Paul during his trial, “In a short time you will persuade me to become a Christian.”

Herod imprisoned Peter with the intention of killing him to please the Jewish people. But the night before his planned execution, an angel of the Lord miraculously freed Peter. Even with guards at their posts, Peter seemingly became invisible to them as his chains fell off and the angel escorted him out of the prison. Peter thought he was having a vision, but then the iron gate opened by itself, and Peter found himself on a city street.

When he realized what had happened, he hurried to Mary’s house, where many people were gathered to pray. A humorous scene unfolds where the servant girl Rhoda runs in to announce his presence, but nobody believes her. What had they been praying for? When they saw that their prayers had been answered, they were all amazed! Nothing can happen to one of the Lord’s people without His full awareness and involvement.

The next day Herod finds out that Peter is missing and has the guards executed. They hadn’t done anything wrong, but life is not always fair. Herod returns to his home in Caesarea, where some people from Tyre and Sidon to the north call him a god and not a man. Herod does nothing to deter them, and an angel of the Lord strikes him with a terrible disease. History tells us that he had to be carried out in great pain and died five days later.

The passage concludes with another “growth marker” – the word of the Lord continued to grow and be multiplied. The Holy Spirit was working behind the scenes, so more and more people came to know Jesus Christ and became part of His church.

