

Acts chapter 12



Out to impress!

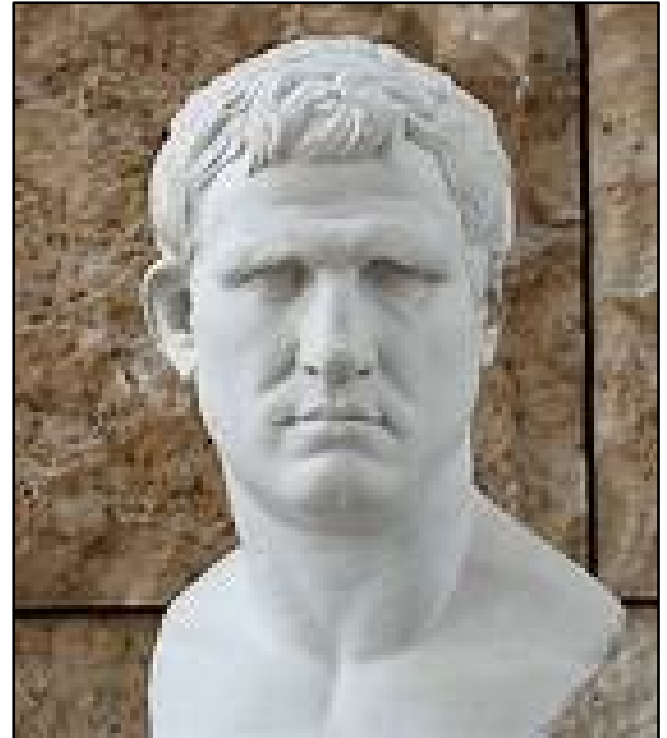
It was about this time that King Herod arrested some who belonged to the church, intending to persecute them.

This was Herod Agrippa I, the grandson of Herod the Great, who ruled in the days of Jesus' birth. Herod Agrippa I was also the nephew of Herod Antipas, who had a role in the trial of Jesus.

“He displayed great acumen in conciliating the Romans and Jews.”

Quote from Britannica.com

Winner or loser?



He had James, the brother of John, put to death with the sword.



Why?

Who was James (Jacob)?

What were the charges?

Sword – decapitation

Mystery?

Drinking the same cup?

Mark 10:38

No replacement for him.

Winner or loser?

Repeat the trick

When he saw that this pleased the Jews,
he proceeded to seize Peter also.



Out to impress!

A significant change has occurred in contrast to the early days.

The Jewish authorities were always hostile to the believers but this is becoming more general in the population in Jerusalem. Herod wants to take advantage of it.

This happened during the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

A special time for believers and there would have been many visitors to Jerusalem – more people to impress!



The Feast of Unleavened Bread was the 8 day festival beginning with Passover.



Top Security

After arresting him, he put him in prison, handing him over to be guarded by four squads of four soldiers each.



Peter had a previous record of mysteriously getting out of prison (Acts 5:19) – so this time they are taking no chances.

4 squads means 24 hour cover

4 soldiers means chained to two with two standing guard!

Herod intended to bring him out for public trial after the Passover.
So Peter was kept in prison,

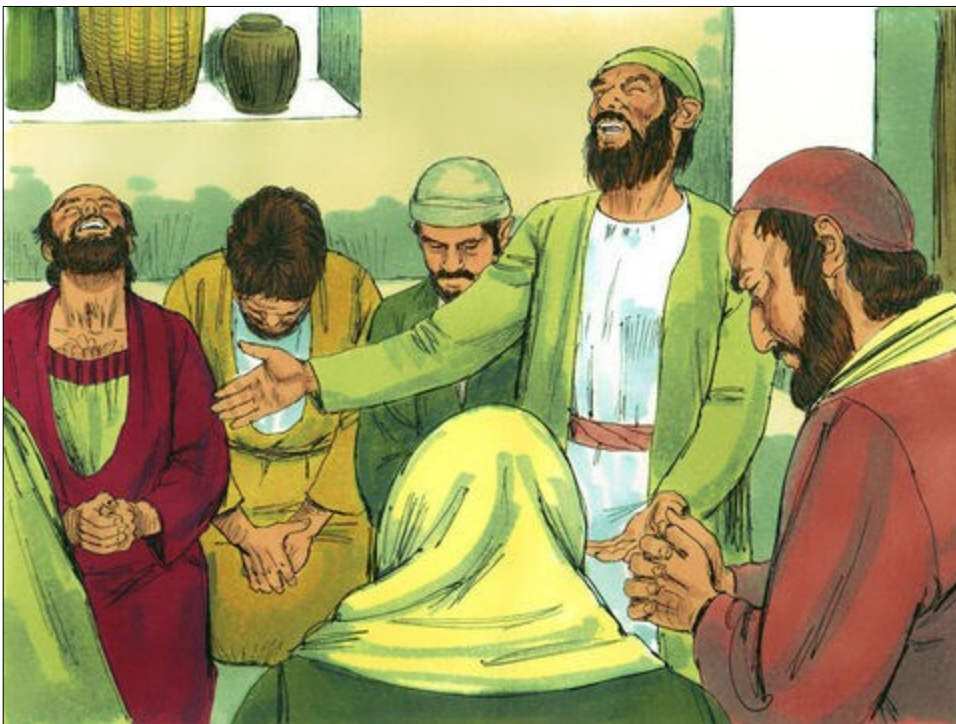
Perhaps there would be less risk of trouble after the crowds had left. Herod wouldn't want to 'desecrate' the feast with a public trial.

Peter was kept in prison for several days. It looks like this is it!

The outcome of the 'trial' is a foregone conclusion.



So Peter was kept in prison,
but the church was earnestly praying to God for him.



What is the difference between prayer and earnest prayer? It's the same word used to describe Jesus praying in Gethsemane. (Luke 22:44)

God hears united prayer.

They couldn't rescue Peter themselves but they could PRAY.

The night before Herod was to bring him to trial, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and sentries stood guard at the entrance.



As far as Peter knew, this could be his last night in this world!
And he is fast asleep!

Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared and a light shone in the cell.



An unexpected prison visitor!

An angel brings the light of God's glory into the cell.

How did he get in?

He struck Peter on the side and woke him up. "Quick, get up!" he said, and the chains fell off Peter's wrists.



He really was asleep.

Did the angel whisper so as not to wake the guards? NO!

Did the angel need keys to unlock the chains? NO!

Peter saw it but the guards never saw or heard anything.

Then the angel said to him, "Put on your clothes and sandals."
And Peter did so. "Wrap your cloak around you and follow me,"
the angel told him.



It's night out there- you are going to need your coat and shoes.

Follow the angel – wise advice.

Peter followed him out of the prison, but he had no idea that what the angel was doing was really happening; he thought he was seeing a vision.



Is this real
or



They passed the first and second guards



The guards were awake (of course)
but they never saw a thing!

They came to the iron gate leading to the city.
It opened for them by itself, and they went through it.



No remote control was needed.
Just like the locks ----
Supernatural angels have
supernatural powers.



When they had walked the length of one street,
suddenly the angel left him.

Where did he go?

Then Peter came to himself and said, "Now I know without a doubt that the Lord sent his angel and rescued me from Herod's clutches and from everything the Jewish people were anticipating."



Here is a mystery?

Winner or loser?

When this had dawned on him, he went to the house of Mary the mother of John, also called Mark, where many people had gathered and were praying.



Peter knew where to find them.
This Mary was the sister of
Barnabas.

It was a prayer meeting in her
house.
The times have changed
– believers have to meet in secret.

Peter knocked at the outer entrance, and a servant girl named Rhoda came to answer the door. When she recognized Peter's voice, she was so overjoyed she ran back without opening it.



Prison gates open on their own but this one won't.

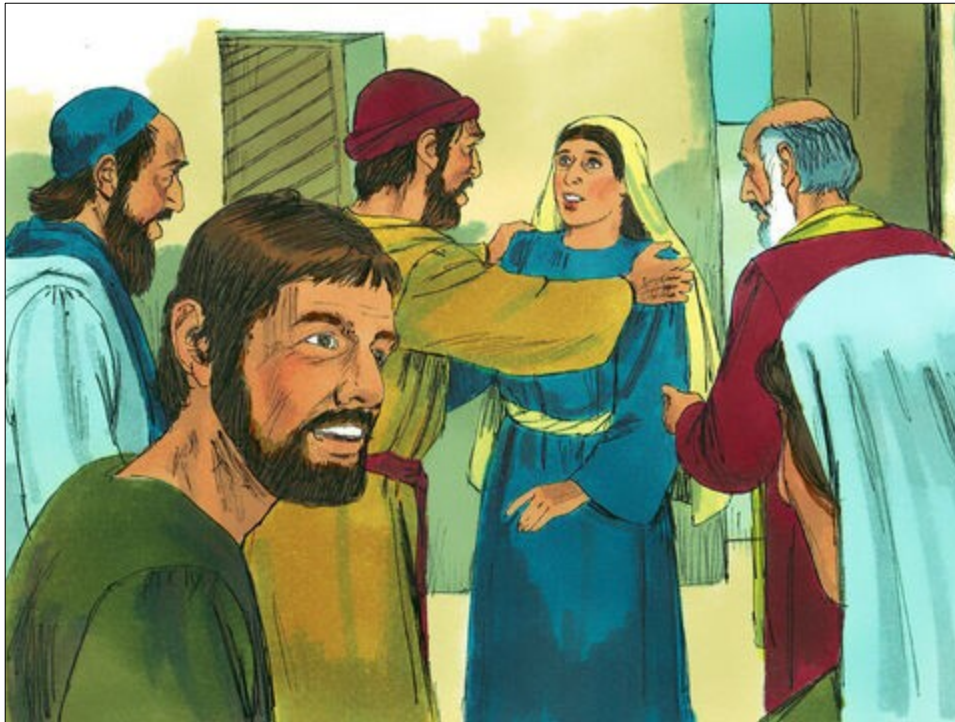
Rhoda is now known as the lady who left Peter locked out!

She rejoiced that their prayer had been answered.

and she exclaimed, "Peter is at the door!"

"You're out of your mind," they told her.

When she kept insisting that it was so, they said, "It must be his angel."



Here are disciples of great faith!

She knew what she had heard.

They explain it away - some believed that we each have a guardian angel appointed to us. Perhaps they even thought Peter was dead!

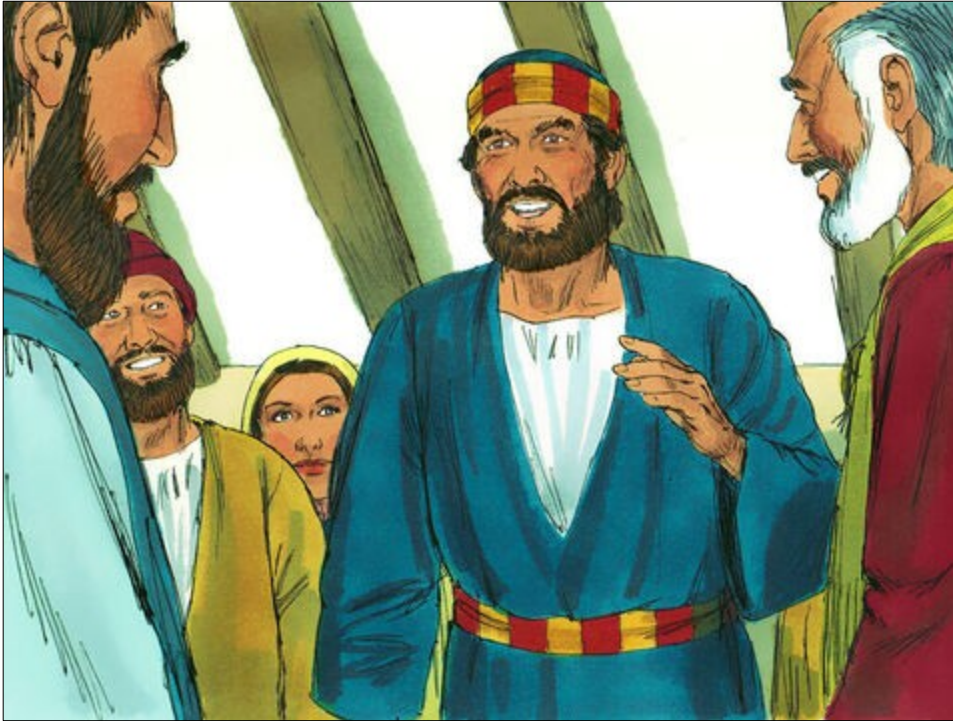
But Peter kept on knocking,
and when they opened the door and saw him, they were astonished.



Why are we surprised when
God answers our prayers?

They were just like us!

Peter motioned with his hand for them to be quiet and described how the Lord had brought him out of prison.



It was a wonderful story to tell.
Good news is worth repeating.

And it was a confirmation to
these people that God had
miraculously intervened to
answer their prayers.

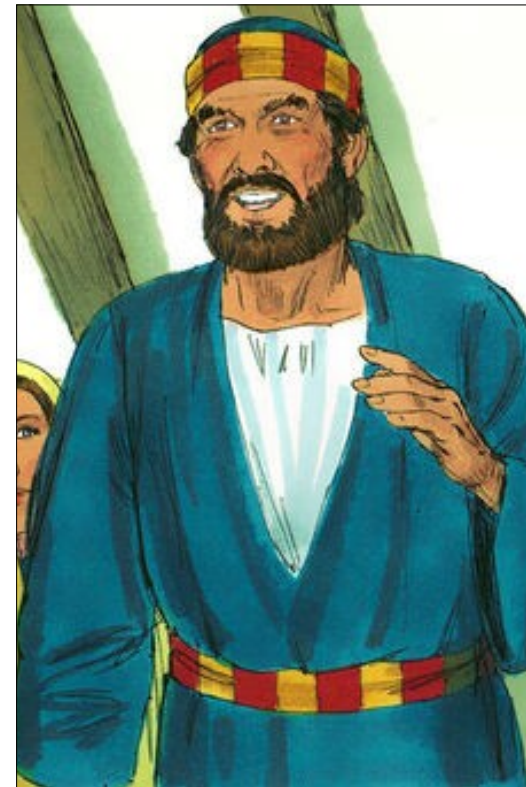
"Tell James and the brothers about this," he said,
and then he left for another place.

Pass the news on!

James (Jacob) was one of the leaders of the church in Jerusalem. He was a half-brother of Jesus.

Let the leadership know what has happened.
Peter then goes into a safer place.

And apart from an appearance in chapter 15, Luke's account makes no further mention of Peter. He has plenty more work to do for the Lord, but it wasn't part of this story.



PS.

In the morning, there was no small commotion among the soldiers as to what had become of Peter. After Herod had a thorough search made for him and did not find him, he cross-examined the guards and ordered that they be executed.



Herod's plan had failed.

The penalty for a soldier losing the person he was guarding was that which the prisoner would have received. You can tell what the result of the 'fair trial' would have been!

↑ Tyre and Sidon



Then Herod went from Judea to Caesarea and stayed there a while. He had been quarrelling with the people of Tyre and Sidon; they now joined together and sought an audience with him.

A trade war

Having secured the support of Blastus, a trusted personal servant of the king, they asked for peace, because they depended on the king`s country for their food supply.

The extent of Herod`s rule was very great. If he encouraged another port, and made regulations for traffic to be diverted from the towns of Tyre and Sidon, he could take away from them at least one-half of the commerce they depended on.



Out to impress

On the appointed day Herod, wearing his royal robes, sat on his throne and delivered a public address to the people.

Josephus, a historian at that time wrote:-

He put on a garment made wholly of silver, and of a texture truly wonderful, and came into the theatre early in the morning; at which time the silver of his garment, being illuminated by the fresh reflection of the sun's rays upon it, shone out after a surprising manner, and was so resplendent as to spread a horror over those that looked intently upon him;

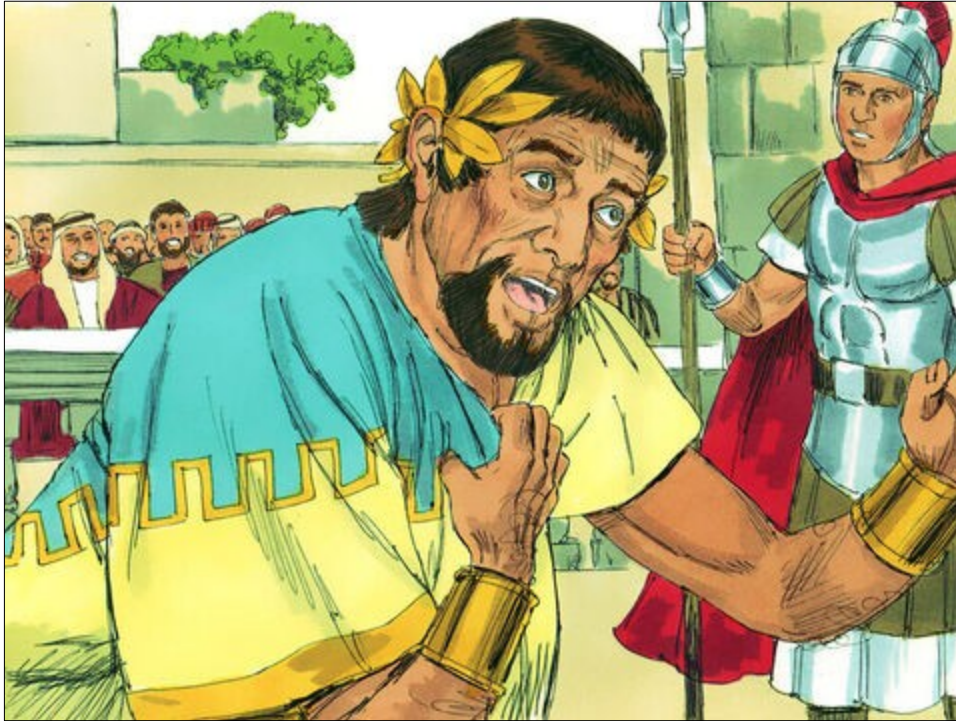


They shouted, "This is the voice of a god, not of a man."



Flattery
Blasphemy
Folly

Immediately, because Herod did not give praise to God, an angel of the Lord struck him down, and he was eaten by worms and died.

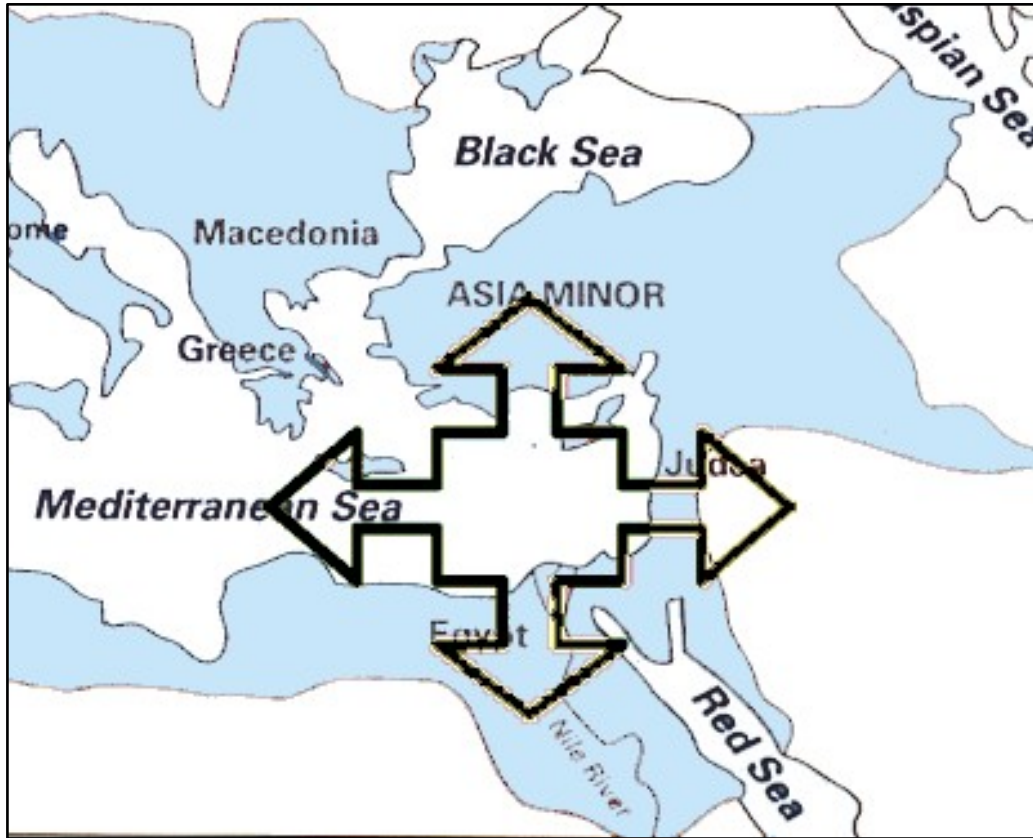


“He displayed great acumen in conciliating the Romans and Jews.”
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Winner or loser?



But the word of God continued to increase and spread.



God's work goes on

PPS.

When Barnabas and Saul had finished their mission, they returned from Jerusalem, taking with them John, also called Mark.

Back to the story in Antioch..

The work goes on, and we are introduced to John Mark as a part of the team.





What makes the difference?
Philippians 3:12-13