

# Acts 12 - Persecution of the Jerusalem Church; Peter in Prison, Miraculously Set Free; Herod Dies; Growth of Church in Asia Minor

## II. Outreach in Judea and Samaria (Acts 8:1—12:25)

- (8) James martyred (12:1-4)
- (9) Peter imprisoned and miraculously released (12:5-19)
- (10) Death of Herod Agrippa (12:20-25)

Antioch will now be the center of the Christian church, not Jerusalem. Jerusalem, as the center of the Church's operations, passes out of sight. It appears only two more times:

- (1) Council regarding Gentile obligations (Acts 15)
- (2) Paul's visit, compelled to seek Roman protection for his life (Acts 21-22)

## Acts 12

- (8) James martyred (12:1-4)

**1 Now about that time Herod the king laid hands on some who belonged to the church, to do them harm.**

**1** Now about that time Herod the king laid hands on some who belonged to the church in order to mistreat them.

**1** About that time, Herod arrested some people who belonged to the church and mistreated them.

**1** Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church.

— "...about that time" - at about the same time as the events in Acts 11 (the first Jerusalem Council and the offering from the church at Antioch to the church in Jerusalem)

— Acts 11 paints a beautiful picture of the church at Antioch; Acts 12 is a horrific picture of unbelieving Israel. Luke wants the reader to contrast these two groups.

— What happens throughout Acts is that God is raising up the church and setting aside the nation of Israel

— "...Herod the king" - Herod Agrippa I, grandson of Herod the Great who ruled during the time of Christ

- He was the nephew of Herod Antipas who murdered John the Baptist. Paul will make his celebrated defense in Acts 26 before his son, Herod Agrippa II.
- He was appointed by the Roman emperor Gaius as king over Palestine in 37 AD. When Claudius succeeded Gaius as emperor, he added Judea and Samaria to Agrippa's territories so that Agrippa governed all that his grandfather, Herod the Great, had ruled. Agrippa ruled Judea for three years (41-44 AD, Cf. v23) and moved his headquarters to Jerusalem.
- The Herodian Dynasty ruled Israel, as a Roman puppet regime, throughout Jesus life and ministry, and thereafter during the time of the early church
- The Herods were not pure Jews...they were Edomites. Their job, as a puppet regime for Rome, was to keep the Jews under control.
- He needed the support of the Jews, so he made a great display of observing the externals of the Mosaic Law in order to please them. However inwardly, he was self-righteous and self-serving.
- "...laid hands on" - emphasizes antagonism (4:3; 5:18); "to do harm" or "to do evil"
- This action began the fourth persecution of the Church of Jerusalem in 44 AD
- "...some who belonged to the church" - this was not a general persecution (Cf. Acts 8), as the "certain ones" he went after were the apostles because of the power they had
- The previous persecutions were heavily against the general membership of the Church of Jerusalem, not specifically against the apostles. This persecution was aimed directly at the leadership of the church.
- "church" - *ekklesia*, the group, which began at Pentecost, who believed by faith in the Messiah that was rejected and killed by national Israel

Herod was born in the year 11 BC, and he was later sent to Rome for his education after his father, Aristobulus, was executed in the year of 7 BC. Herod the Great was always afraid that someone was conspiring against him to take his throne. One of the victims of his suspicions was his son, Aristobulus, so Herod the Great had Aristobulus executed as well as his mother, Mariamne. But by then, Aristobulus had sired a son, named Agrippa I. With his father dead, Herod the Great sent the young boy to Rome for his education. While in Rome, he grew up with the imperial family and became very close friends with Gaius, better known by the name Caligula, the grand nephew of Emperor Tiberius. Caligula became emperor in 37 AD and gave Agrippa I the tetrarchies of his uncle and the title of "king." In 39 AD, both Galilee and Perea fell into the hands of Herod Agrippa I. In 41 AD, the new emperor Claudius, gave Herod Judea and Samaria, which made Agrippa I king over all Israel, where he ruled for four years until his death in 44 AD.

In Jerusalem, Jewish tensions with the Jerusalem church began to resurface. Peter and the other apostles now openly allowed Christians, whether Jew or Gentile, to associate apart

from the Law. King Herod exploited this dispute during the increased population and emotion in Jerusalem during Passover to gain political favor with Jews who did not accept Jesus as Messiah.

2 And he had **James the brother of John executed with a sword.**

2 And he had James the brother of John put to death with a sword.

2 He even had James, the brother of John, killed with a sword.

2 And he killed James the brother of John with the sword.

- Herod sought job security above justice. He murdered James the apostle to boost his approval ratings; then he arrested Peter (v3). He planned to increase his popularity through a public trial and execution of Peter after Passover.

- "...James the brother of John" - not Jesus' half brother, who wrote the epistle of James; also not James the son of Alphaeus

— This James was the brother of Apostle John (Cf. 1:13-14), one of Christ's inner circle (Peter, James, and John, Cf. Matt 17:1), and one of the "sons of thunder." He was the first of the 12 apostles to die (not counting Judas Iscariot).

— He was at the Transfiguration (with Peter and John), the raising of Jairus' daughter, and the Garden of Gethsemane

— Jesus was approached by Salome, the mother of James and John, who requested that her sons sit at His left and right hand in the kingdom. Jesus asked if they were willing to drink of cup that He was about to drink. James and John replied, "We are able."

— Jesus then told them (Matt 20:23), "My cup you shall drink." This was a veiled prediction of what would later happen to one of the brothers, James.

- "...executed with a sword" - this was the first martyrdom of an apostle documented in Scripture

— Acts 8:1 tells us that the apostles mainly stayed in and around Jerusalem, even as many other Jews scattered because of persecution

— Previously, Stephen (a deacon) was martyred (Acts 7), and there was general persecution by the Jews of the church (8:3-4; 11:19)

— This execution of an apostle, James, by Herod Agrippa, is documented by Luke to show that the hatred and persecution of Israel against the church is getting worse, not better

— This helps to explain the discipline of Israel in 70 AD

3 When **he** saw that it **pleased the Jews**, he proceeded to **arrest Peter** as well. (Now these were **the days of Unleavened Bread.**)

3 When he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also. Now it was during the days of Unleavened Bread.

3 When he saw how this was agreeable to the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter, too. This happened during the Festival of Unleavened Bread.

3 And because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also. (Then were the days of unleavened bread.)

- "...he" - Herod Agrippa I
- One thing to understand about the Herodian dynasty is that they were Edomites (descendants of Esau), or half-breed Jews. They were also puppets of Rome.
- All of the Herods were very insecure about their throne, their right to rule; they were always trying to do anything they could to keep their approval rating high among the Jews do Rome would allow them to remain in power.
- One of the reasons for this was Deut 17:15: you shall in fact appoint a king over you **whom the LORD your God chooses. One from among your countrymen** you shall appoint as king over yourselves; **you may not put a foreigner over yourselves, anyone who is not your countryman.**
- So Herod Agrippa I, like the other Herods, was always nervous that the Jews were going to rise up and take his power away, based on this verse
- Therefore he was always wanting to make the Jews happy, so when he saw that the Jews were pleased at the execution of James, Herod decides to please them more by arresting Peter
- "...pleased the Jews" - another indication of how Jewish disdain and hatred for the church was increasing and becoming more prominent...now they are cheering for the murder of apostles
- Now Herod ups the ante and goes after a second apostle, Peter
- This persecution did not arise from anything the Christians did, but simply because Herod wanted to gain popularity with the Jews
- "...arrest Peter" - this is Peter's third arrest (4:3; 5:18)
- "...the days of Unleavened Bread" - the seven days immediately following Passover, which the Mosaic Law required all Jewish males to attend
- Herod didn't want to kill an apostle during a feast period, so he arrested and jailed him, then planned on bringing him before the public (like Barabbas) and asking them what he should do with Peter, which he knew would be to execute him

4 When he had arrested him, he put him in prison, turning him over to **four squads of soldiers** to guard him, intending *only* after the Passover to bring him before the people.

4 When he had seized him, he put him in prison, delivering him to four squads of soldiers to guard him, intending after the Passover to bring him out before the people.

4 When he arrested Peter, Herod put him in prison and turned him over to four squads of soldiers to guard him, planning to bring him out to the people after Passover season.

4 And when he had apprehended him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four quaternions of soldiers to keep him; intending after Easter [Passover] to bring him forth to the people.

- "...four squads of soldiers" - a total of 16 soldiers, guarding Peter around the clock, four soldiers every six hour shift

— Two of the four soldiers were chained to Peter, while the other two stood guard outside the cell

— It's likely that Herod knew about Peter's previous "escape" from prison (5:18-21)

(9) Peter imprisoned and miraculously released (12:5-19)

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

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

5 So Peter was kept in prison, but earnest prayer to God for him was being offered by the assembly.

5 Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him.

- A stark contrast: where Herod sought popularity and power for himself, God's people sought only to glorify Him and seek Him in unceasing prayer

- Peter was probably imprisoned in the Roman Fortress of Antonia, on the north wall of the temple enclosure

- James was dead and Peter was imprisoned, heavily guarded, and in danger of following in James' footsteps and being executed as well, within just days. This was a severe crisis for the Jerusalem church.

— They had suffered several crises before, but this was a major crisis because the attack was aimed specifically against the apostolic leaders of the church

- "...intensely" - *ektenōs*, fervently (Cf. 1 Peter 1:22)

— In his epistles, Paul talks about "agonizing" in prayer, a different (higher) level of prayer where the one praying is in agony while going before the Lord in prayer

— It's interesting that our prayer life picks up when we encounter a physical/health issue, instead of checking the box every day. But as soon as you get a problem in your life you can't fix, your prayer life all of a sudden picks up.

— This is why Paul looked at his sufferings not as an enemy, but as an ally or as a gift. This is why James said that we should "count it all joy" when we fall into various trials. This is why Paul boasted in his sufferings and weakness, because he understood the spiritual growth and maturity that came through trials.

— Many times God will put temporary circumstances or trials in our lives so that we'll talk to Him...otherwise, we wouldn't talk to Him most of the time. We don't go to God with an attitude of urgency and fervently when things are not going wrong, we just go through the motions because that's who we are in our fallen state.

**6** 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.

**6** 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.

**6** That very night, before Herod was going to bring him out, Peter, bound with two chains, was sleeping between two soldiers, and guards in front of the door were watching the prisoners.

**6** And when Herod would have brought him forth, the same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains: and the keepers before the door kept the prison.

- "...Peter was sleeping" - the eighth day of the Passover season, on the night before his trial and probable execution, Peter slept

— He had a record of sleeping when he should be praying (Cf. Matt 26:36-46; Luke 22:45)

— Perhaps he did not fear for his life because Jesus implied he would live to an old age (John 21:18-19); however, God had just allowed James' execution.

- Another way to look at this is that Peter had matured in his faith to the point that he was sleeping just as Jesus slept in the boat when the huge storm hit the Sea of Galilee (Mark 4:35-41). Peter here is actively doing what he later commanded believers to do in 1 Peter 5:7: ...cast all your anxiety on Him, because He cares about you.

— Maybe the reason Peter was sleeping so soundly under these circumstances is because the Holy Spirit resided in him, and he had grown in his faith to a point where he is okay with whatever the Lord wills in this situation

[Phil 4:6-7]

**7** And behold, an **angel of the Lord** suddenly stood near Peter, 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.

**7** And behold, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared and a light shone in the cell; and he struck Peter's side and woke him up, saying, "Get up quickly." And his chains fell off his hands.

7 Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared and a light shone in the cell. He tapped Peter on his side, woke him up, and said, "Get up quickly!" His chains fell from his wrists.

7 And, behold, the angel of the Lord came upon him, and a light shined in the prison: and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, Arise up quickly. And his chains fell off from his hands.

- "...angel of the Lord" - *angelos kyriou*, again, an angel of the Lord visited Peter in prison (5:19; Cf. 8:26; 12:23)

— This was not an OT incident of the pre-incarnate Christ

— "...quickly" - *tacos*, can be interpreted either as chronological or as an adverb (a word that modifies a verb)

— Example: when you fill your car with gas, insert your credit card, the screen will tell you to "Remove Card Quickly." "Quickly" is an adverb here, modifying the verb "Remove." To remove card quickly doesn't mean you need to do it within one second or the machine will eat your card. It means to pull it fast rather than remove it slowly.

— The angel is telling Peter to get up fast...don't delay...move quickly. It's being used as an adverb rather than chronologically.

- Notice that the angel gave Peter a command ("Get up quickly"), and once that command was obeyed, the chains fell off. God is telling Peter you need to obey Me first before you see results.

— Many times when God wants to do something in us, He wants us to obey Him first, then trust Him for the results

8 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."

8 And the angel said to him, "Gird yourself and put on your sandals." And he did so. And he \*said to him, "Wrap your cloak around you and follow me."

8 Then the angel told him, "Tuck in your shirt and put on your sandals!" He did this. Then the angel told him, "Put on your coat and follow me!"

8 And the angel said unto him, Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals. And so he did. And he saith unto him, Cast thy garment about thee, and follow me.

- "...Put on your belt" - *zōnnymi*, literally "gird yourself"; the only other place this word is used in the NT is in John 21:18 (Jesus' prophecy of Peter's life)

John 21:18: **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.**"

9 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.

9 And he went out and continued to follow, and he did not know that what was being done by the angel was real, but thought he was seeing a vision.

9 So Peter went out and began to follow him, not realizing that what was being done by the angel was real; he thought he was seeing a vision.

9 And he went out, and followed him; and wist not that it was true which was done by the angel; but thought he saw a vision.

- Peter wasn't sure if he was seeing a vision or if what was happening was reality

— Remember, in Acts 10, Peter fell into a trance and saw a vision of the sheet with the animals (Cf. 10:10,17)

10 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.

10 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.

10 They passed the first guard, then the second, and came to the iron gate that led into the city. It opened by itself for them, and they went outside and proceeded one block when the angel suddenly left him.

10 When they were past the first and the second ward, they came unto the iron gate that leadeth unto the city; which opened to them of his own accord: and they went out, and passed on through one street; and forthwith the angel departed from him.

- "...by itself" - *automatos*, automatically; as Peter approached the gate, God opened it automatically

— We should never doubt that God can open doors in our lives. Maybe it won't be a physical door, but maybe an opportunity will open up (Cf. John 10:7; Rev 3:8).

11 When Peter came to himself, he said, "Now I know for sure that the Lord has sent forth His angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting."

11 When Peter came to himself, he said, "Now I know for sure that the Lord has sent forth His angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting."

11 Then Peter came to himself and said, "Now I'm sure that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from Herod and from everything the Jewish people were expecting!"

**11** And when Peter was come to himself, he said, Now I know of a surety, that the Lord hath sent his angel, and hath delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews.

- Peter now realizes that these events are really happening and not contained in a vision (Cf. v9)

- Back in v3, Herod originally arrested Peter because of the positive response he heard from the Jews after he executed James (see notes there)

— Herod thought that if he continued persecuting Christians, it would keep the Jews happy and solidify his power base

— This demonstrates the guilt of 1st century Israel, and why God was raising up the church at this point...because He can't use Israel at this point. Because God never leaves the earth without a witness of Himself, He is raising up this "new man" (the Church).

### **Peter's Arrival at the House of Mary**

**12** And **when he realized this**, he went to the house of **Mary**, the mother of **John, who was also called Mark**, where many were **gathered together and were praying**.

12 And when he realized *this*, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John who was also called Mark, where many were gathered together and were praying.

12 When Peter realized what had happened, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John who was also called Mark, where a large number of people had gathered and were praying.

**12** And when he had considered the thing, he came to the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark; where many were gathered together praying.

- "...when he realized *this*" - when Peter realized he was living through these events and they were not a dream or vision (Cf. v11)

- "...Mary" - there are six Mary's listed in the NT:

1. Mary the mother of Jesus

2. Mary of Bethany, sister of Martha and Lazarus

3. Mary Magdalene

4. Mary the wife of Cleopas

5. Mary the mother of John (also the mother of James who was executed in v2)

6. Mary the mother of Mark (here)

- "...John, who was also called Mark" - best known today as "Mark" the writer of the Gospel of Mark

— He has a minor role in Acts, but a major role in the history of the early church due to his writing of the Gospel of Mark

— He had two names: John (*Yochanan*) was his Hebrew name, and Mark (or Marcus) was his Latin name

- He was a cousin of Barnabas (Col 4:10); he was best known among the Romans, and it was for them that he wrote his Gospel
- John Mark is mentioned 8x in the NT: Acts 12:12,25; 15:37,39; Col 4:10; 2 Tim 4:11; Philemon 24; 1 Peter 5:13. In 1 Peter 5:13, Peter referred to Mark as his "son" which means Peter led him to the Lord. Subsequently, Mark became his disciple.
- "...gathered together and were praying" - in the early church, prayer was a first resort, not a last resort (Cf. v5)
- After James was martyred and Peter was arrested and prepared to be executed, notice that the early church gathered together and prayed
- They didn't protest, or make their displeasure with the political leadership known to all. They just prayed. These things aren't necessarily bad or wrong, but too often today they eclipse prayer.

13 When he knocked at the door of the gate, a slave woman named Rhoda came to answer.

13 When he knocked at the door of the gate, a servant-girl named Rhoda came to answer.

13 When he knocked at the outer gate, a servant girl named Rhoda came to answer it.

13 And as Peter knocked at the door of the gate, a damsel came to hearken, named Rhoda.

14 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.

14 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.

14 On recognizing Peter's voice, she was so overjoyed that she didn't open the gate but ran back inside and announced that Peter was standing at the gate.

14 And when she knew Peter's voice, she opened not the gate for gladness, but ran in, and told how Peter stood before the gate.

- Rhoda is so excited that she didn't open the gate to allow Peter to enter, but instead rushed inside to tell those who were praying that Peter was outside

15 They said to her, "You are out of your mind!" But she kept insisting that it was so. They said, "**It is his angel.**"

15 They said to her, "You are out of your mind!" But she kept insisting that it was so. They kept saying, "It is his angel."

15 The other people told her, "You're out of your mind!" But she kept insisting that it was so. Then they said, "It's his angel."

15 And they said unto her, Thou art mad. But she constantly affirmed that it was even so. Then said they, It is his angel.

- The less than positive reaction to the answer to their prayers was likely because they had resigned themselves the fact that Peter was going to be martyred just like James was

— However, the Bible tells us that when we pray, we must ask in faith without any doubt that God can do it (James 1:6-8). We need to pray with confidence, no matter how unlikely we think the answer to our prayer is.

— While it is true that God is not obligated to answer prayer requests outside of His will, many times we don't know exactly what God's will is in a particular circumstance. We shouldn't look to defeats or unanswered prayers in our lives, or earlier setbacks we experience, allowing our minds to be controlled by doubt.

— The disciples and other believers who were in prayer for Peter evidently thought that an answer to this prayer request, for Peter's release, was even too big for God.

- "...It is his angel" - this is not a question, it's a statement about the reality of guardian angels (Cf. Matt 18:10; Heb 1:14)

16 But Peter continued knocking; and when they had opened *the door*, they saw him and were **amazed**.

16 But Peter continued knocking; and when they had opened *the door*, they saw him and were amazed.

16 Meanwhile, Peter kept on knocking and knocking. When they opened the gate, they saw him and were amazed.

**16** But Peter continued knocking: and when they had opened the door, and saw him, they were astonished.

- Rhoda was persistent in telling those in the home about Peter (v15), and Peter was also persistent in his knocking at the gate to get inside

— While this is a minor example, the fact is that God honors perseverance and persistence (Cf. Matt 7:7-11)

- "...amazed" - they were shocked that God answered their prayer?

— Sometimes God will answer our prayers over and above what we asked for, much better than we expected. But here, God just answered their prayers, and they were shocked.

— We need to pray *expecting* God to answer our prayer, especially if we know that what we're praying for is His will

17 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**.

17 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 brethren." Then he left and went to another place.

17 He motioned to them with his hand to be quiet, and then he told them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. He added, "Tell this to James and the brothers." Then he left and went somewhere else.

17 But he, beckoning unto them with the hand to hold their peace, declared unto them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he said, Go shew these things unto James, and to the brethren. And he departed, and went into another place.

- "...he described" - *diēgeomai*, Peter recounted to them the entire story of his release from prison

— This home was likely the home church that Peter presided over; the people gathered inside praying for him were his congregation

- "...how the Lord" - notice how Peter doesn't take any credit for his release/escape from prison, but gives all glory to the Lord

— And how could he take any credit? He was asleep and had to be awakened by the angel, who released the chains and automatically opened doors for him to escape.

— But often we are in the same circumstance... "sleeping" while the Lord is doing something miraculous. Then after we are awakened to what happened, we either take the credit for what took place, or we tell of exactly what happened, without giving any credit or glory to God, who made it all happen.

— This is why God picks unqualified people to do His work...so He gets the glory for what He did. God doesn't call the qualified, He qualifies the called (Cf. Is 42:8).

- "...James" - this refers to James, the half-brother of Jesus; he was the pastor of the Jerusalem church and wrote the epistle of James in the NT (Cf. 1:13-14)

- "...he left and went to another place" - he fled out of Jerusalem. Luke chose not to disclose to us where Peter went, but we know something of his travels from other passages:

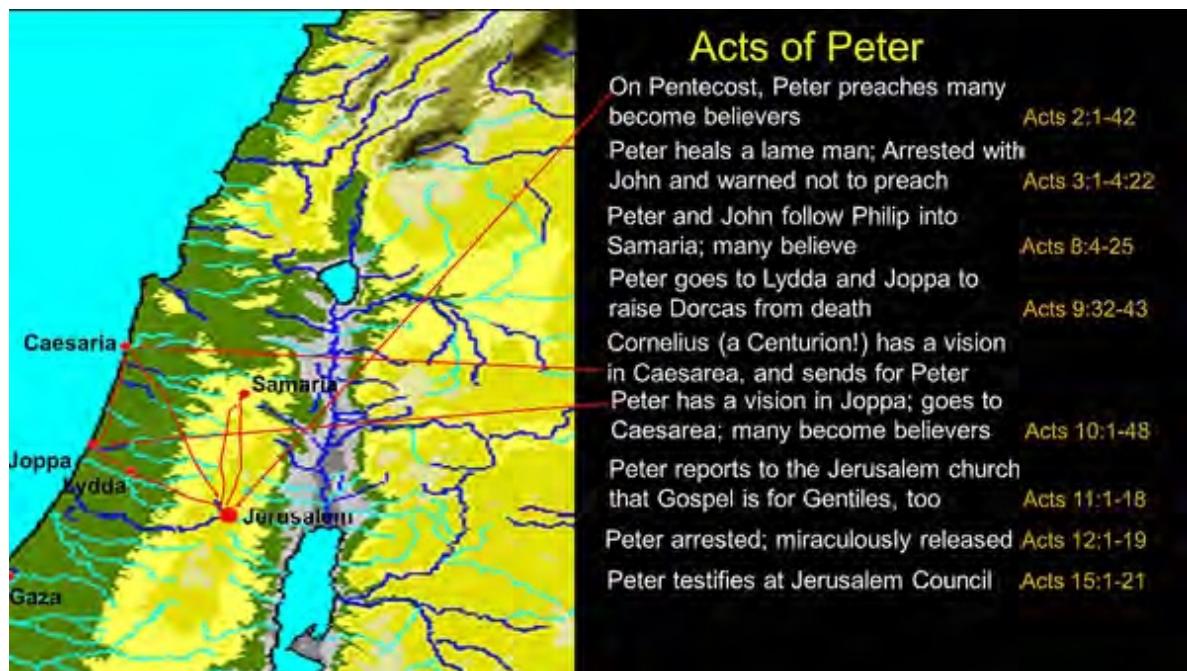
- He spent some time in Corinth (1 Cor 1:12; 9:5)
- He had an itinerant ministry, along with his wife (1 Cor 9:5)
- He went to Antioch of Pisidia (Gal 2:11)
- He was in Asia Minor (1 Peter 1:1)
- He also was in Babylon (1 Peter 5:13)

— It's at this point that Peter drops out of sight in the book of Acts (except for a brief visit to the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15). Peter was the apostle to the Jews, while Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles (Gal 2:7-8).

— Previously in Acts, Peter had returned from prison to the Temple, and had resumed preaching at the Lord's command (5:19-21). Now the Jews were much more hostile to the

Christians. Saul had previously left Jerusalem for his own safety (9:29-30), and this time Peter followed his example.

- Peter had become infamous among the Jews in Jerusalem for associating with Samaritans and Gentiles, as well as for being the leader of the Christians
- Luke's spotlight in Acts now shifts primarily from Peter (who took the gospel to Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria) and focuses on Paul (who will take the gospel to the uttermost parts of the earth)



Luke does a masterful job in Acts strategically weaving together the comparisons of Peter's ministry and Paul's ministry, all for the benefit of Theophilus who was a Roman Gentile believer wondering if Christianity was for him because everything seemed to Jewish. When he sees the parallels between Peter's ministry and Paul's ministry, it communicated to him that Paul's ministry to the Gentiles was just as legitimate as Peter's ministry to the Jews.

1. Both Peter and Paul engaged in three significant tours recorded in the Book of Acts:
  - Peter: 8:14ff; 9:32—11:2; 15:1-14 (see Gal 2:11)
  - Paul: 13:2—14:28; 15:36—18:22; 18:23—21:17
2. Early in their ministry both healed a lame person: Peter: 3:2ff; Paul: 14:8ff
3. Both saw extraordinary healings take place apart from physical contact with the afflicted individual: Peter's shadow (5:15); those who brought handkerchiefs and aprons to Paul (19:11). [The text does not say definitively that Peter's shadow was God's instrument in healing people.]

4. Both were God's instruments to bring judgment on those who hindered the growth and purity of the infant church. Peter condemned Ananias and Sapphira (5:1-11); Paul smote Elymas with blindness (13:6-11).
5. Each had at least one long discourse [re]produced in full which gives a summary of his preaching: Peter at Pentecost (2:14-40); Paul at Antioch (13:16-42).
6. Both made the resurrection a primary emphasis in their proclamation: Peter: 2:24-36; 3:15,26; 5:30; 10:40-41; Paul: 13:30-37; 17:3,18,31; 24:15,21; 25:19; 26:8,23.
7. Both exorcised demons: Peter: 5:16; Paul: 16:18.
8. Both communicated the gift of the Holy Spirit by the laying on of hands: Peter: 8:17; Paul: 19:6.
9. Both had triumphant encounters with sorcerers: Peter: 8:18ff; Paul: 13:6ff.
10. Both raised the dead: Peter: 9:36ff; Paul: 20:9ff.
11. Both received visions to direct them into critical witnessing efforts: Peter: 10:9ff; Paul: 16:6ff.
12. Both experienced miraculous deliverances from prison: Peter: 12:7ff; Paul: 16:25ff.

From Peter to Paul	
PETER	PAUL
Heals a man lame from birth (3:1-11)	Heals a man lame from birth (14:8-18)
Heals by shadow (5:15-16)	Heals by handkerchief (19:11-12)
Success is a cause of jealousy (5:17)	Success is a cause of jealousy (13:45)
Confronts a sorcerer (8:9-24)	Confronts a sorcerer (13:6-11)
Raises Dorcas (9:36-41)	Raises Eutychus (20:9-12)
Jailed and miraculously freed (12:3-19)	Jailed and miraculously freed (16:25-34)

### The Results of Peter's Escape

**18** Now when day came, there was **no small disturbance** among the soldiers as to what could have become of Peter.

**18** Now when day came, there was no small disturbance among the soldiers as to what could have become of Peter.

**18** When morning came, there was a great commotion among the soldiers as to what had become of Peter.

**18** Now as soon as it was day, there was no small stir among the soldiers, what was become of Peter.

- "...no small disturbance" - this is a figure of speech called a *litotes*. A litotes is an understatement or negative statement to express an affirmation; it's the opposite of hyperbole.

— Luke used this figure of speech numerous times (Cf. 12:18; 14:28; 19:24; 21:39; 27:20)

**19** When Herod had searched 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.

**19** When Herod had searched 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.

**19** Herod searched for him but didn't find him, so he questioned the guards and ordered them to be executed. Then he left Judea, went down to Caesarea, and stayed there for a while.

**19** And when Herod had sought for him, and found him not, he examined the keepers, and commanded that they should be put to death. And he went down from Judaea to Caesarea, and there abode.

- "...he examined" - *anakrinō*, examined thoroughly; Herod interrogated the guards on exactly how Peter escaped from prison

- "...led away to execution" - Herod did not get a good explanation or evidence for Peter's escape, so he ordered the guards to be executed (Cf. 16:27)

— This was common Roman practice, and serves as evidence for Jesus' bodily resurrection  
- Herod leaving Judea and traveling to Caesarea was standard procedure for the ruler of Judea following the Passover

— Caesarea was the political capital and Roman headquarters for Judea

(10) Death of Herod Agrippa (12:20-25)

**20** 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 asking for peace, because their country was supported *with grain* from the king's country.

**20** Now he was very angry with the people of Tyre and Sidon; and with one accord they came to him, and having won over Blastus the king's chamberlain, they were asking for peace, because their country was fed by the king's country.

**20** Now Herod had been in a violent quarrel with the people of Tyre and Sidon. So they came to him as a group. After they had won over Blastus, who oversaw security for the king's sleeping quarters, they asked for a peace agreement because their country depended on the king's country for food.

**20** And Herod was highly displeased with them of Tyre and Sidon: but they came with one accord to him, and, having made Blastus the king's chamberlain their friend, desired peace; because their country was nourished by the king's country.

- "...very angry" - *thymomacheō*, highly displeased; carry on a war with great animosity; exasperated

— The reason why Herod was so enraged at the people of Tyre & Sidon is because he had cut off their food supply (their supply of grain) (Cf. 1 Kings 5:9)

- "...they" - ambassadors from Tyre and Sidon

- "...Blastus" - in charge of Herod's bedchamber

— Evidently, ambassadors from Tyre & Sidon came to see Herod in Caesarea to discuss his decision to cut off grain exports to Lebanon. They instead encountered Blastus and appear to have won him over to their side.

**21** On an appointed day, after putting on his royal apparel, Herod took his seat on the rostrum and *began* delivering an **address** to them.

**21** On an appointed day Herod, having put on his royal apparel, took his seat on the rostrum and *began* delivering an address to them.

**21** Therefore, at a set time Herod put on his royal robes, sat down on the royal seat, and made a speech to them.

**21** And upon a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne, and made an oration unto them.

- "...address" - *dēmēgoreō*, an angry speech; a harang

— Herod made this angry speech at this festival, aimed at the ambassadors from Tyre & Sidon who came to see him

— Josephus makes mention of this speech, noting that it was a festival day in honor of Caesar Claudius [Antiquities, 17.6.8]

**22** The people *repeatedly* cried out, "The voice of a god and not of a man!"

**22** The people kept crying out, "The voice of a god and not of a man!"

**22** The people kept shouting, "This is the voice of a god, not of a man!"

**22** And the people gave a shout, saying, It is the voice of a god, and not of a man.

- While Herod is giving this speech, laying into these ambassadors from Tyre & Sidon (and likely with his ego unchecked), the people begin venerating him as a god

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.

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.

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

23 And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost.

- While the people began venerating and worshiping Herod, he did not reflect the glory back to God that he was receiving from the crowds

- "...angel of the Lord" - notice it was an angel of the Lord who brought judgment on Herod, killing him instantly. Thus we learn from this verse (along with the judgment on Sodom & Gomorrah, Gen 19:15,22) that one of the activities of angels is to bring judgment.

- "...he did not give God the glory" - Herod did the same thing Nebuchadnezzar did in Dan 4...swelled with pride at his lofty position, his power and his authority, and refused to give credit to God for the that, along with the splendor of Babylon

- There are a number of sins that God seems to have extra grace for, and then there are some sins that God judges almost immediately. One of the sins that God judges quickly is pride.

— The Bible speaks often of pride and its ill-effects (Cf. Prov 16:18; Is 14:12-15; Ezek 28:12-17; 2 Cor 12:7; 1 Tim 3:6; 1 Peter 5:5)

— "...eaten by worms" - *genomenos skolékobrōtos*, literally means "becoming worm-eaten"

— The word *skoléx* was used of intestinal worms; Heroditus (4th century historian) describes people in being eaten alive by intestinal worms, a common malady in ancient times.

— Josephus described Herod's death as occurring five days after the painful stomach condition began, stating "that the rotting of his flesh produced worms, an item in harmony with the narrative of Luke"

## **Herod's Death**

*Herod was at Caesarea, presiding over the games in honor of Caesar. On the second day of the games, Agrippa entered at daybreak, clothed in a robe of silver, on which the rays of the morning sun were alighting, he appeared as if all irradiated with glory; numerous voices saluted him as a god; and on his making an oration to them they shouted, "We have taken thee for a man, but henceforth we recognize in thee a god!" The king rebuked them not, nor showed any displeasure at this impiety; he saw an owl perched on a rope over his head, and immediately, taking this for an ill omen, he was filled with remorse, and was seized with violent pain in his bowels, exclaiming to his friends, "Your god is already come to his life's*

*end, and he who you saluted immortal is going to away to die." To such a height did the pain rise that he had to be carried hastily into the palace, where, after five days torture, he expired in his 54th year. [Josephus, *Antiquities...* 19:8:2; Cf. 18:6:7; 19.356-359]*

- 24** But the word of the Lord continued to grow and to be multiplied.
- 24** But the word of the Lord continued to grow and to be multiplied.
- 24** But the word of God continued to grow and spread.
- 24** But the word of God grew and multiplied.
  - So the wrap up to the 4th persecution of the church is that the gospel continued to be spoken and the church continued to grow/multiply
    - This, even after James, one of Jesus' apostles, was martyred, and Peter was thrown in prison with the intent to execute him
    - Satan has two strategies to counter the church: persecution, which is what he tried here and failed; and, if you can't beat them, join them: he can apply for membership.
    - Satan's much better strategy, and one that he employs today, especially in the United States, is to join the church...teach Sunday School, lead a small group, or even get behind the pulpit!

### **Eight Numerical Progress Reports in Acts**

1. Acts 2:47: "...And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved."
2. Acts 4:4: "But many of those who had heard the message believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand."
3. Acts 6:7: "The word of God kept spreading; and the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith."
4. Acts 9:31: "So the church throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria enjoyed peace, as it was being built up; and as it continued in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it kept increasing."
- 5. Acts 12:24: "But the word of the Lord continued to grow and to be multiplied."**
6. Acts 16:5: "So the churches were being strengthened in the faith, and were increasing in number daily."
7. Acts 19:20: "So the word of the Lord was growing and prevailing mightily."
8. Acts 28:30-31: "Now Paul stayed two full years in his own rented lodging and welcomed all who came to him, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching things about the Lord Jesus Christ with all openness, unhindered."

### **Growth of the Church to Cyprus and Asia Minor (12:25—16:5)**

In his Gospel, Luke recorded that Jesus came to bring deliverance to the Jews and to the whole world (Luke 4:14-30). He told the story of Jesus' personal ministry, primarily to the Jews. In Acts the emphasis is on Jesus' ministry, through His apostles, to the Gentile world. As the mission to the Gentiles unfolds in Acts, we can see that Luke took pains to show that the ministry to the Gentiles paralleled the ministry to the Jews. He did this by relating many things that the missionaries to the Gentiles did, that were very similar to what the missionaries to the Jews did. This demonstrates that God was indeed behind both missions, and that they are really two aspects of His worldwide plan: to bring the gospel to all people and to build a worldwide church.

This section shows more than just the geographical expansion of the church into Gentile territory (primarily Asia Minor). It also shows the legitimacy of dealing with Gentiles as *Gentiles*—rather than through Judaism—before and after their conversion. It becomes increasingly clear that the church and Judaism are two separate entities. God was not renewing the Remnant in Israel by replenishing it with Gentiles who believed in Jesus. He was creating a new body: the Church. This section culminates in the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15), in which the issue of the Gentiles' relationship to the church came to a head.

### **The Appointment of Barnabas and Saul (12:25—13:3)**

**25** And Barnabas and Saul returned when they had fulfilled their mission to Jerusalem, taking along with *them* John, who was also called Mark.

**25** And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem when they had fulfilled their mission, taking along with *them* John, who was also called Mark.

**25** When Barnabas and Saul had fulfilled their mission, they returned from Jerusalem, bringing with them John who was also called Mark.

**25** And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem, when they had fulfilled their ministry, and took with them John, whose surname was Mark.

— Saul and Barnabas left Jerusalem and traveled to Antioch (about 280 miles). It seems they arrived in Jerusalem just as the persecution broke out (James' death, Peter's arrest), and returned to Antioch shortly after the death of Herod.

— The reason they were in Jerusalem to begin with was to deliver the contribution for the relief of the Jerusalem Christians, from the church in Antioch (Cf. 11:29-30)

— This verse is a turning point in Acts geographically...for the first time, the focus and center of the church will be outside of Jerusalem, outside of Israel, in Antioch

— Something like this never happened in the OT...there is no example of a prophet leaving Israel and ministering to Gentiles (with the exception of Jonah)