

The Death of a King

Acts 12 is loaded! It contains murder, imprisonment, prayer, miracles, angels, and the death of a king.

The chapter begins with King Herod persecuting the church (Acts 12:1). This is not Herod the Great (Matthew 2:1) or Herod Antipas (Luke 23:8-12). This is Herod Agrippa I.

Herod Agrippa did much to protect and help the Jews, and they greatly respected and admired him. To please the Jews, Herod murdered the Apostle James and locked up the Apostle Peter (Acts 12:2-4). James is the only apostle whose death we can read about in the Bible.

The church prayed fervently for Peter while he was imprisoned (Acts 12:5). God responded to their prayer by sending an angel to deliver Peter (Acts 12:6-19). Upon his release by the hands of the angel, Peter was able to visit the brethren gathered for prayer at Mary's house.

God would strike Herod with intestinal worms (Acts 12:20-25). This judgment resulted from Herod being prideful and accepting the glory due to God.

Consider some lessons we can from this interesting chapter.

God's people are not exempt from suffering.

- Both James and Peter suffered for the cause of the gospel. Why did God allow James to be killed but not Peter? The text doesn't tell us.
- God doesn't always reveal the purposes of His will.
- Regardless of what we have to endure in this life, we must always trust God. We must always understand that God can see things we can't and knows things we don't (Proverbs 3:5-7).
- Just because life doesn't always go our way doesn't mean that God is not actively accomplishing His will.

God is at war with Satan.

- Herod and the Jews were workers of Satan. James and Peter were workers of God. All of these people were engaged in spiritual warfare!
- We also are involved in spiritual warfare (Ephesians 6:10-13). This war requires that we equip ourselves in God's full armor (Ephesians 6:14-18).
- We need to anticipate persecution and rejoice if we are able to suffer for Christ (1 Peter 4:12-16; John 15:18-20; Acts 5:41-42).
- We need to pray for one another (Acts 12:5). We need to pray for the courage and strength to stand firm and endure.

God's gospel will not be stopped!

- By the end of the chapter, Peter has been released from prison, and Herod is dead!
- Herod tried to stop the gospel's progress, but God's will prevailed (Acts 12:24-25; 13:1-3).
- Regardless of how hostile our culture becomes to our faith, God's cause will never be stopped! The gospel will always advance. It will never fail or be silenced.
- Let's never be fooled into believing that the devil is winning the spiritual battle!

Conclusion:

Which side of the spiritual battle are you?