

**Acts 12:** James the Apostle Killed By Herod (See also 1 Peter 3.12)

- Herod Agrippa died in 44 A.D., so his persecution must have started in late 43 or early 44.
  - He was grandson of Herod the Great who ordered the babies killed when Jesus was born. (Luke 1.5).
  - The Herod's worshipped only themselves and their desires
  - They were noted for their great building projects
  - Herod the Great killed his own two sons and his wife, Marianne because of politics and paranoia.
  - Herod Antipas(Lk.8.3) ruled when Jesus taught in Galilee
    - He married his niece, Herodias; John the Baptist lost his head when he confronted him about this.
- Death of James the Apostle
  - See (Matt.20.22): Jesus asked James and John, "are you able to drink the cup (suffering) that I am about to drink?"
  - Then He said, "My cup you shall drink..."
- Peter Imprisoned by Herod (12.3-5)
  - He saw that it pleased the Jews
  - Now, I killed the # 3 apostle, he must have thought, let's go for # 1!
  - "Feast of Unleavened Bread": the week long feast following the Passover (later blended together by the Jews and just called Passover.)
  - Roman governors came from Caesarea to Jerusalem for special feasts.
  - His goal was to execute Peter (like James) after the Passover (Pascha)
  - V.4: four squads of four soldiers each (16) to guard Peter
  - V.6: Peter was handcuffed to two soldiers
  - From a human perspective, it was impossible for Peter to escape!
  - What are the Christians to do?
    - Angry rhetoric could have flowed; great plans laid out;
    - Mobilize all males to storm the prison!
    - Instead of getting all up in arms, they got down on their knees!

- Herod had closed the doors to the prison, but he had not closed the door to Heaven!
  - They had probably prayed for James too; James still died.
  - They were discouraged; one blow after another; seemed impossible.
  - They knew their only hope lay with God (See Rom.8.26).
- God Answers Prayer (12. 6-17)
  - Peter slept: the night before his execution; on a cold hard floor; chained between 2 soldiers; he slept so soundly that an angel had a hard time waking him up. Why???? (Psa.4.8)
  - Perfect trust in the Almighty God!
  - V.10: The iron gate that leads into/out of the city swung open (Gk. automatos) by itself.
    - It normally took at least 25 men to open the gate because of its monster size.
  - At least 7 miracles in this narrative:
    - The angel appeared
    - The light shone in the cell
    - The chains fell off
    - The ones to whom Peter was chained did not wake up
    - They passed one guard w/o him knowing it
    - They passed a 2<sup>nd</sup> guard w/o him knowing it
    - The outer gate swung open automatically.
    - God heard His people and responded (Eph.3.20, 21).
- V.11: “Now I know for sure that the Lord has sent forth His angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod...”
- V.12: He went to the house of Mary.
  - Christians still had property in Jerusalem (not all had sold).
  - Mary was the mother of John Mark
  - Peter probably converted John Mark (1 Pet. 5.13).
  - The servant girl recognized John Mark’s voice (familiar).
- V.15: “you are out of your mind!”
  - They prayed to God and then were surprised when He answered???

- V.16: Peter continued knocking!
- V.17: He motioned for them to keep silent (must have been loud rejoicing).
  - “Go tell these things to James (the Lord’s half- brother) and the brethren.” See Acts 15.2, 13;; 21.18; Gal. 2.9).
  - Peter did not mention any of the other Twelve because they probably were not in Jerusalem at the time...preaching etc.
  - “He departed and went to another place.” The authorities probably knew that Mary’s house was a gathering place for Christians.
  - Luke concentrates on the work of Saul/Paul from here on through the rest of the book of Acts.
- The Death of Herod (12.18-24). (Sequel to story of Peter’s Deliverance)
  - No small disturbance...shock, accusations plenty, etc.
  - Soldiers were executed (Prisoner escape was a capital offense).
  - No Herod could tolerate looking like a fool...massive search was on.
  - There is no way that every hand-picked guard was caught up in a conspiracy. What else could have happened???
  - After the execution, Herod went down from Judea to Caesarea.
  - He was angry with Tyre and Sidon (Lebanon today).
  - See 1 Kings 5.9-12; Ezra 3.7 for background
  - Blastus, the king’s Chamberlain—King’s butler (trusted personal servant)
  - King Herod sat down and began his address to the people:
    - Josephus Antiquities said that Agrippa put on a garment made wholly of silver...reflected sunlight greatly and that the people looked on in horror and said that “it is a god...”
    - Josephus said, “That Herod did neither rebuke them, nor reject their impious flattery.”
    - God thought otherwise! (See Isaiah 42.8; 40.23).
  - Immediately: “an angel of the Lord struck him because he did not give God the glory, and he was eaten of worms.” (44 AD.)
    - Josephus: “A severe pain also arose in his belly, and he began in a most violent manner...Accordingly he was carried to the palace; and when he had been quite worn out by the pain in his belly, for five days, he departed this life, being in his 54<sup>th</sup> year of his age.”

- Historically: It was the end of the Herods; after this Judea was put again under a series of governors, most notably, Felix and Festus (See Acts 23-26).
  - We meet Herod Agrippa II in Acts 26; he reigned over a small region of NE Galilee.
  - A little over 20 years later, Titus and Vespasian destroyed Jerusalem in 70 AD. The Jews were finished.
- V.24: “But the word of the Lord continued to grow and be multiplied.”
- V.25: “And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem when they had fulfilled their mission, taking along with them John, who was also called Mark.”
  - See 11.29, 30: Barnabas and Saul had carried the contribution to the needy saints and Jerusalem and were now returning.
- Lessons For Us:
  - Why did God spare Peter and not James?
    - Possibly James’ death would be more advantageous for the Cause as was Peter’s release.
    - Or another way to look at it,” Why did James receive the honor of being the first apostle to go home to God, while Peter had to wait many more years before he was ushered into God’s presence?
    - Psa. 116.15: “Precious in the sight of God are the death of His saints.”
    - God’s every answer is exactly right!!