



**Acts 12:1-11 – Can I get a Witness?
Wk. 36 “The Delivering Power of God”
By Mike Clark 06/4/2023**

Acts 12:1-11 About that time Herod the king laid violent hands on some who belonged to the church. ² He killed James the brother of John with the sword, ³ and when he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also. This was during the days of Unleavened Bread. ⁴ And when he had seized him, he put him in prison, delivering him over to four squads of soldiers to guard him, intending after the Passover to bring him out to the people. ⁵ So Peter was kept in prison, but earnest prayer for him was made to God by the church. ⁶ Now when Herod was about to bring him out, on that very night, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and sentries before the door were guarding the prison. ⁷ And behold, an angel of the Lord stood next to him, and a light shone in the cell. He struck Peter on the side and woke him, saying, “Get up quickly.” And the chains fell off his hands. ⁸ And the angel said to him, “Dress yourself and put on your sandals.” And he did so. And he said to him, “Wrap your cloak around you and follow me.” ⁹ And he went out and followed him. He did not know that what was being done by the angel was real, but thought he was seeing a vision. ¹⁰ When they had passed the first and the second guard, they came to the iron gate leading into the city. It opened for them of its own accord, and they went out and went along one street, and immediately the angel left him. ¹¹ When Peter came to himself, he said, “Now I am sure that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting.”

INTRODUCTION –

As we’ve been going through the book of Acts, we’ve seen that the early church was going through persecution, and not just going through persecution, but growing through persecution.

Historically, the church has had the greatest growth during times of intense persecution.

But behind that persecution and attack is the one who seeks to destroy the church, that is the devil. And the early church was under massive Satanic attack.

And try as he may, at the same time God was blessing His church, and people were being saved in amazing numbers (thousands!)

And this is exactly what Jesus said – the gates of hell will not prevail over the church.

The death of Jesus Christ was undone and death itself was defeated, the devil and his demons were disarmed and defeated eternally, and God’s cause triumphed!!!



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Now, God is working some numerous and very public miracles and people are responding in faith by the thousands!

Jews, Samaritans, and now Gentiles have been saved and the devil was fighting it all the way!

From the very first days he began to attack the church to weaken it & to destroy it.

You remember in –

Ch. 2 - Pentecost – 3,000 saved

Ch. 3 – Miracles take place and the lame beggar is healed

Ch. 4 – Devil attacks from outside the church - Persecution (Peter & John arrested)

Ch. 5 – Devil attacks within the church – Corruption (Ananias & Sapphira)

Ch. 5 – Devil attacks from outside the church – Persecution (arrested again!)

Ch. 6 – Devil attacks within the church – Division and Distraction (widows and deacons)

Ch. 7-8 – Devil attacks from outside the church – persecution of Stephen & the Jerusalem church

Ch. 9 – Devil attacks from outside the church – Jews plot to kill Saul in Jerusalem

Ch. 10-11 – Devil attacks within the church – Jews are upset about Gentiles in the church.

And now as we come to Ch. 12, we see that the Devil attacks from outside the church – Herod kills James and arrests Peter.

And you know what happened throughout all those moments? - Each time the church grew!

4:4

5:14, 16

6:1

Ch. 9 – Saul gets saved and preaches Jesus.

Ch. 10 – Cornelius

Ch. 11 – the mixed crowd at Antioch

And so, Luke has been recording one marvelous conversion after another.

The early church gave witness at any cost and established its identity while God protected it, whether in death leading to glory or in miraculous escape.



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And he’s about to describe a great leap forward for the church in the 1st missionary journey.

But first, he tells us about a serious setback. Church – you need to understand something. You need to understand something about the devil.

See: Satan doesn’t stop and quit, he never rests, he keeps up the attacks.

NOW the attacks get deadly for a second time!

Point 1 – Deliverance of God from persecution sometimes means being taken home to glory.

Acts 12:1-2 About that time Herod the king laid violent hands on some who belonged to the church. ² He killed James the brother of John with the sword.

“About that time.” What time? If we go back to the end of chapter 11, we read there was a great famine coming in verse 28 and so this is about the time of the famine during the reign of emperor Claudius that Pastor Jody talked about last week.

About that time Herod the king. Which Herod? Herod the king was Herod Agrippa I (reigned from 37 – 47 AD). He was the grandson of Herod the Great (reigned from 47 BC to just after Christ’s birth).

Herod the Great had murdered his grandson’s father – Aristobulus, when Agrippa I was just 4 years old.

(He also killed one of his wives, her mother, & 3 of his sons)
(And he killed the babies in Bethlehem – Matt. 2:16)

And one day Paul would stand before Agrippa I’s son: Herod Agrippa II

His mother sent him to Rome to be brought up and educated there. He grew up on terms of close friendship with some members of the imperial family, notably with Claudius and Gaius, who was a grandnephew of Tiberius.

When Gaius succeeded Tiberius as emperor in A.D. 37, he gave Agrippa tetrarchies or territories of Syria that were divided into fourths and gave him the title of king.

When Claudius was made emperor in A.D. 41, after the assassination of Gaius, he further increased Agrippa’s realm by the addition of Judea.



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Agrippa was more popular with the Jews than many members of the Herod family had been and was very close to the Pharisees.

But this Herod had a shaky relationship with Rome:

- He ran up numerous debts in Rome, and then fled to Palestine.
- He made some unwise comments that got back to the Emperor Tiberius, who imprisoned him
- He was released after Tiberius's death & made ruler of Palestine by Caligula

Because of his shaky relationship with Rome, it was imperative that he maintain the loyalty of his Jewish subjects.

- For one thing, they hated the Roman authority over them.
- For another thing, this Herod had Edomite ancestry!

And so his popularity among the Jews may well explain his hostility to the new Christian movement that the Jewish leadership so opposed, especially as he sought to stay in the good graces of the ruling Sadducean party.

And one way he attempts to win favor with the resident Jewish authorities was that he attempted to persecute the hated sect of Christians – especially the apostles.

This Herod must have been well informed about Jesus & His followers.

Q: Why might he be so well informed?

His uncle, Herod Antipas, had tried Jesus at Pilate's request.
(There are actually 4 Herod's in the NT!)

Herod's motive is simple: political expediency – his own power! He is willing to kill people that he feels are a threat to that!

But he was restrained by the power of God because if he had had his way, he probably wouldn't have been content with just killing James and Peter, but might have continued his murderous rampage on the rest of the apostles and other Christians.

Herod had a leash around him, and the Lord only allowed him to do what was in His sovereign plan.....

.....Just like God allowed the apostle Paul to attack the church for only so long before the Lord Jesus put a stop to it on the road to Damascus.



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SO: Who does he go after? – He goes after some who belonged to the church or members of the church. Now this could refer to regular members of the church or more specifically the apostles or both.

And so, Agrippa lays violent hands on some. The word in the Greek is kakoo and means to do evil or to do harm. He lays violent hands on them in order to do evil.

And so, Herod kills James.

Q: Which James is this? - The disciple, not the half-brother of Jesus (author of the book of James) and not James the son of Alphaeus. He is the brother of the apostle John as the text clearly tells us.

He is the first apostle to suffer martyrdom. He is the second martyr in Acts, after Stephen. His is the only apostle whose death is recorded in the NT.

Q: How did he die? More than likely he was beheaded as John the Baptist was. There is also the possibility that he was run through with the sword.

But beheading was among the more shameful deaths in the Roman manner and was a more common form of execution.

Interestingly, Foxe's book of martyrs says that when James was being led to his execution, his extraordinary courage impressed one of his captors to such a degree that he fell on his knees before the apostle, asked for his forgiveness, and confessed that he was a Christian too. He said that James should not die alone, whereupon they were both beheaded.

"With the sword" suggests he was convicted of leading the people astray after false gods. It's very possible that the religious leaders had Deuteronomy 13 in mind thinking that James and the apostles were leading the people astray.

Deuteronomy 13:12-15 - ¹² "If you hear in one of your cities, which the LORD your God is giving you to dwell there, ¹³ that certain worthless fellows have gone out among you and have drawn away the inhabitants of their city, saying, 'Let us go and serve other gods,' which you have not known, ¹⁴ then you shall inquire and make search and ask diligently. And behold, if it be true and certain that such an abomination has been done among you, ¹⁵ you shall surely put the inhabitants of that city to the sword, devoting it to destruction, all who are in it and its cattle, with the edge of the sword.

Q: Does his death fulfill any specific prediction by the Lord?



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Mark 10:35-40 - *³⁵ And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came up to him and said to him, "Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you." ³⁶ And he said to them, "What do you want me to do for you?" ³⁷ And they said to him, "Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory." ³⁸ Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?" ³⁹ And they said to him, "We are able." And Jesus said to them, "The cup that I drink you will drink, and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized, ⁴⁰ but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared."*

Q: Was Herod's plan a success? So far, Yes!

Point 2 – Deliverance of God sometimes come through miraculous means.

Acts 12:3-5 *³ And when he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also. This was during the days of Unleavened Bread. ⁴ And when he had seized him, he put him in prison, delivering him over to four squads of soldiers to guard him, intending after the Passover to bring him out to the people. ⁵ So Peter was kept in prison, but earnest prayer for him was made to God by the church.*

Notice Herod's motivation. He's not motivated by zeal for religion or the law of Moses or any hatred of the gospel.

He's motivated that he might provide for his own private affairs and increase his power and wealth. He wanted favor with the Jews so that he could get what he wanted.

It's amazing the evil that some people will do in order to get wealth and power. And even more amazing, especially in our own day, is when people do evil for no reason at all.

People will shoot and murder people they don't even know for no other reason than the desire to murder.

In addition, people will overlook a thousand evils in others but will magnify the most trivial offence in the true follower of Jesus. The world eyes Christians as suspected persons. We're extremists right? They're always watching us.

The cross of Christ is in itself offensive to the world, so let's be on our guard that we don't give unnecessary offense, but if we offend, may we offend by the message of the gospel.



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SO, Agrippa decided to go all out! He figured that if he could arrest and kill Peter, the leader of the church, then that would forever endear him with the Jewish leaders.

And he does this during the days of Unleavened Bread, which is right after the Passover, so this is during the same time of year that Jesus was crucified which gives an ominous tone.

SO: During Passover, Peter is seized and put in prison.

Q: Why did Herod wait until then? - Jerusalem would be filled with devout Jews, whom he wanted to win over! Which ensures maximum coverage!

So, Peter is kept in prison for the duration of the festal period, until Passover is completed. Agrippa's intentions were to bring him out for trial and public execution immediately after this period had expired.

But knowing how many sympathizers the apostles had in Jerusalem, Agrippa takes special precautions against any attempt to free the prisoner.

He's heavily guarded: 4 squads of 4 soldiers each, so a total of 16! – probably on a rotating watch through the night.

More than likely they divided the day and night into four parts by three hours.

Four guards at a time, one on either side of him, to whom he was chained, and two at his cell door.

He's definitely in the maximum-security wing of the prison.

If he's held at the same location as Paul later in Acts 21, then he is at the Antonia Fortress that Herod built at the northwest edge of the temple complex.

NOTICE: God let Peter get arrested and put in jail and had to sit in jail for a while!

Q: How many times is this for Peter?

3rd time (4:3; 5:18)

Q: How do you think the average Christian would handle that?

- Devastate them, depressed,
- Second guess themselves, God, etc.
- (We're a very emotional and easily depressed people!)



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But our ways are not His ways as Isaiah 55 tells us, right? We don't always know why God allows certain trials, but He has given us some general reasons why He sometimes allows us to suffer.

He tells us in 2 Corinthians 12 that His grace is sufficient for us and that His power is made perfect in our weakness.

Philippians 1 tells us that it has been granted to us that for the sake of Christ we should not only believe in Him but also suffer for His sake.

And just a few chapters over in Acts 14, we are told that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.

NOTICE: God let James be killed, and Peter only arrested!

Again, God's ways are wise and beyond discovery. Even the most severe and deadly trials are part of God's wise plan.

But what do you think might have been going through Peter's mind while in prison being chained between those guards? – Well, we get a hint in just a little bit as we continue in our story.

Q: How did the church respond? With fervent/earnest prayer. Not casual prayer, but maximum effort (Luke 22:44) – similar to Jesus in the Garden, being in agony, He prayed more earnestly.

What else could they do? Herod had an army, the prison is strong, and Peter's guarded by 16 guards.

There was only one weapon they could use – "All prayer." – Bunyan.

When every other gate was shut, the gate of heaven was open.

So, they sent prayers up to Him who is able to release the prisoners and set the captives free.

They understood James 5:16! - The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.

Q: Don't you think they prayed for James too?



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Q: What does that tell you about how much God loved James vs. Peter.

Q: Do you think Peter's wife prayed more than James' family?

Q: Did God care more about Peter & his wife than James and his?

Q: Why did God answer their prayers for Peter, but not James?

Q: Was it because Peter was more important?

I'm sure the church was praying for both James and Peter and just because God chose to allow James to be put to death and Peter spared doesn't mean that God loved Peter more than James.

God answered their prayers according to His own sovereign will and purpose. It was God's will to take James home to glory and to keep Peter alive for continued ministry.

Peter wasn't more important, it was just part of God's plan.

But let me ask this - How about you church? Are you praying for persecuted Christians? Are you praying fervently for them?

Do we pray for pastors and other Christians when they are arrested and locked up for preaching the gospel in hostile countries? Or for their families when they are killed?

How about when Christians are arrested and put in jail for keeping church open and singing hymns when they've been commanded by the government not to do that?

How about when people are arrested when they pray silently in front of abortion clinics?

How about those who are in prison and have perhaps come to Christ? Do we pray that God would give them strength to serve the Lord faithfully in the midst of a horrific environment?

Have we not experienced and felt the power of prayer in our own church as the Lord has graciously and powerfully answered many of our prayers?

If you haven't in a while, join us for our prayer meetings where we pray for our leaders, our pastors, our families, and persecuted Christians.



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Take everything to God in prayer no matter how hard or difficult the situation.

Psalm 50:15 - *And call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me."*

And by God saying he will deliver means he may deliver you from harm or he may deliver you from this life and take you home.

But, may God help us to earnestly pray for Christians in these situations, for one day some of us may go through some of these same things in our country.

Point 3 – Deliverance of God results in praise to God as He gets the glory.

Acts 12:6-11 *⁶ Now when Herod was about to bring him out, on that very night, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and sentries before the door were guarding the prison. ⁷ And behold, an angel of the Lord stood next to him, and a light shone in the cell. He struck Peter on the side and woke him, saying, "Get up quickly." And the chains fell off his hands. ⁸ And the angel said to him, "Dress yourself and put on your sandals." And he did so. And he said to him, "Wrap your cloak around you and follow me." ⁹ And he went out and followed him. He did not know that what was being done by the angel was real, but thought he was seeing a vision. ¹⁰ When they had passed the first and the second guard, they came to the iron gate leading into the city. It opened for them of its own accord, and they went out and went along one street, and immediately the angel left him. ¹¹ When Peter came to himself, he said, "Now I am sure that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting."*

So again, Peter has more than likely been lying in prison the whole week of Passover and now it's over and it's the last night before he was to be brought out.

Herod thought he was sovereign. He thought he had the situation well under hand. But God had other plans!

Listen to what God has said in His Word about those who think as Herod did.

Job 5:12 *He frustrates the devices of the crafty, So that their hands cannot carry out their plans.*

Psa. 33:10 *The LORD brings the counsel of the nations to nothing; He makes the plans of the peoples of no effect.*

Is. 8:10 *Take counsel together, but it will come to nothing; Speak the word, but it will not stand, For God is with us."*



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GOD IS SOVEREIGN!

Psalm 2:1-5 *Why do the nations rage,
And the people plot a vain thing?
2 The kings of the earth set themselves,
And the rulers take counsel together,
Against the LORD and against His Anointed, saying,
3 "Let us break Their bonds in pieces
And cast away Their cords from us."
4 He who sits in the heavens shall laugh;
The LORD shall hold them in derision.
5 Then He shall speak to them in His wrath,
And distress them in His deep displeasure:*

Isaiah 40:15,23-25 - 15 *Behold, the nations are as a drop in a bucket,
And are counted as the small dust on the scales;
Look, He lifts up the isles as a very little thing.
23 He brings the princes to nothing;
He makes the judges of the earth useless.
24 Scarcely shall they be planted,
Scarcely shall they be sown,
Scarcely shall their stock take root in the earth,
When He will also blow on them,
And they will wither,
And the whirlwind will take them away like stubble.
25 "To whom then will you liken Me,
Or to whom shall I be equal?" says the Holy One.*

Listen church - God is in control. Stop forgetting that! Start believing that!

Peter believed it! I asked earlier what you thought was going through Peter's mind being put in prison. According to verse 6, what is Peter doing?

He's sound asleep!!

Not the presence of the guards, the hard floor, the filthiness of the prison, nor the imminent threat of execution disturbed his rest!!!

Peter throws himself on the mercy of God and shuts his eyes as peacefully as though he was going to wake up tomorrow to a wedding feast and not his own execution.



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Do you remember what Jesus was doing during the storm on the lake? He was sleeping peacefully as the apostles were fearing for their lives.

Faith never says "How?" Unbelief says "How?" "How can it be?"

Q: Do you know what the #1 cause of insomnia is? - Stress, Worry.

Had Peter been worrying about his situation, what good would it have done?

The story is told of an American soldier on a ship in World War II and the ship was being torpedoed. And this man jumped into the ocean because the ship was being torpedoed, and he was picked up by a German freighter. The experience is one of tremendous fear and stress on the nerves of the man. He was down in the hold of this German freighter. Obviously, the Germans were the enemy. And he wrote this little biography, "I began to commune with the Lord. At first I couldn't sleep," he wrote. "Then I remembered the words of Psalm 121, 'My help comes from the Lord who made heaven and earth. He that keeps thee will not slumber. Behold, He will neither slumber nor sleep.' So I said, 'Lord there is no use both of us staying awake. I'll thank you for some sleep,' he said, 'And I got it.'"

Beloved - Don't carry a burden that is God's burden. Don't lose sleep. Trust the Lord. Don't carry the burden of the future for the people that you love, for the people around you, for the issues that fill your life. Go to sleep. God doesn't – ever.

And NOTICE how well Peter is resting: he's sleeping so soundly that the angel had to strike him on the side to wake him up!

Our tranquilizer and sleeping pill society could take a lesson from Peter on how to trust God!!!

1 Peter 5:7-10 - *Casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. ⁸ Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. ⁹ Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. ¹⁰ And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.*

Do you know how you know God will be faithful to you tomorrow?

Not only because His Word says so, but Because He was faithful to you yesterday....



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Past performance is a guarantee of future results / promises!

PETER was trusting in God and what God was going to do.

On the other hand, Herod neglected to consider what God might do!

God had more ministry for Peter and did not want him dead yet.

Q: Can you be killed before God is finished using you?

**NO. SO: If you're not dead yet, then God's not done using you!!!
GET BUSY!!**

SO: God sends an angel to get Peter out of prison. This is the second of three prison escapes that we see in the book of Acts.

The scene is reminiscent of -

Luke 2:8-9 – ⁸ And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹ And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them.

Angels are quite active in the book of Acts.

In chapter 5, an angel releases the apostles from prison. In chapter 8 an angel directs Philip to the Ethiopian eunuch to share Christ with him.

In chapter 10, an angel appears to Cornelius preparing him to hear the gospel.

In chapter 27, an angel appears to the apostle Paul encouraging him when they were almost lost at sea.

They are indeed spirits sent forth to minister to those who will inherit salvation as Hebrews 1 tells us right?

But they also carry out God's judgment as we will later see when we get to the end of chapter 12.

Again, notice how much it took to wake up Peter. The bright light didn't wake him. The angel had to strike him on the side and verbally tell him to Get UP quickly!

As Peter finally woke up, his chains fell off his hands and miraculously the guards chained to him don't wake up.



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He's still half asleep & groggy & not sure what to make of the situation and has to be reminded to get dressed!

Peter thought he was dreaming! Notice that even though he thinks it's a vision, he nonetheless obeys. He doesn't ask the angel questions about how this is possible like Zachariah, but just does what the angel tells him to do.

You know when we see someone who we would never expect to become a Christian, actually becomes a Christian, we think we are dreaming....

.....Because while fallen men may baffle us by their evil and foolishness, a redeemed person is a mystery we can't fathom!

Any maybe that happened to some of you. God changed your heart so powerfully and gave you the knowledge of salvation and forgave you all your sins and you thought I must be dreaming, this can't be real.

Before you were a Christian you were asleep, dead in sin and the angel of the Lord entered your prison cell of sin. You were dreaming of other things than those that were in store for you.

It was only when you were delivered that you saw how fast you had been held. The rescued soul alone can know how Satan binds our captive minds fast in his chains of slavery.

On the other hand, how many people think their dreams are real and true. These are people who are deluded. Or so-called Christians that say God visited them in a dream or spoke to them in a dream or they took a trip to heaven or hell. Baloney!

It's like Isaiah 29 where it says, "As when a hungry man dreams, and behold, he is eating, and awakes with his hunger not satisfied, or as when a thirsty man dreams, and behold, he is drinking, and awakes faint, with his thirst not quenched."

Do you dream of peace? It's just a dream without pardon. Do you dream of heaven? It's just a dream without holiness.

Verse 10 appears to suggest that these other two guards are asleep as well. Perhaps God gave them a divine anesthetic like we see in examples in the OT.

It's also possible that with God controlling everything, Peter and the angel pass by at just the right time where the guards do not see them pass by.



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Maybe it was similar to what happened when Jesus was in Nazareth and declared that He was the Messiah. Do you remember what the people tried to do after His declaration?

They tried to throw Him off a cliff. Do you remember what happened? – He passed through their midst and they couldn't find Him.

So, Peter gets to this iron gate and it opens "on its own" - (It obeyed the voice of God!)

Then they walk safely in the street unnoticed to a safe place and the angel departs from him; His duty is done (Heb. 1:14).

I wonder if Charles Wesley had this passage in mind when he wrote the hymn "And can it be?"

Verse 4 goes like this –

Long my imprisoned spirit lay
Fast bound in sin and nature's night;
Thine eye diffused a quickening ray,
I woke, the dungeon flamed with light;
My chains fell off, my heart was free,
I rose, went forth, and followed Thee.

Well Peter finally wakes up and realizes HE REALLY IS FREE! THIS IS NOT A DREAM!

Peter's commentary on the event is also the scene's point. Peter recognizes that the rescue is the Lord's protection of him from Herod and all the expectations of the Jewish people.

The apostle is confident that they want him dead, and the rescue has prevented that result.

He extols and praises God for his deliverance and gives Him the glory, something Herod will end up refusing to do.

And this certainly isn't the first time the Lord has rescued his people.

Think about Noah, Moses, Rahab, David, Daniel, Jonah, Jeremiah, Esther, and Paul.



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2 Peter 2:9 - *Then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment.*

Beloved - Boast in the Lord and speak of what he has done for your soul!

When a Christian's situation is put into God's hands, He will certainly manage it well and He will intervene in sufficient time to bring His servants out of their distress.

God is never before His time nor is he ever too late. He comes just when He is needed.

When God comes to deliver His people, all circumstances that seem to go against their deliverance will only set forth more of His glory!

God puts contempt on chains, prisons, soldiers, and gates and laughs at them.

So Christian, rest assured that everything that looks black to your gaze now, will only make it brighter when God delivers you.

No difficulty can ever occur which God can't meet when He makes bare His arm.

But maybe for some of you, you are still left worrying about the iron gate. The chains are gone, the guards are past but you're still worrying about the iron gate.

Listen - If you're a Christian, God has delivered you from your chains and you're bondage to sin. He has set you free in Christ Jesus.

He's delivered you countless times from situations that seemed impossible to get out of. And after all He's done, you are still worrying about the iron gate. How?

Remember this beloved – since the day of your salvation when you put your trust in Him, it has been God's cause, not yours! It's been God's work to deliver, not your work!

CONCLUSION -

This story of God's miraculous deliverance of Peter is one of the more well-known stories of the NT.

It bears witness to the delivering grace of God and to the power of believing prayer.



**Acts 12:1-11 - Can I get a Witness?
Wk. 36 "The Delivering Power of God"
By Mike Clark 06/4/2023**

It's a mystery of divine providence that James should die while Peter should escape.

But this kind of thing has happened all through the history of God's people.

Hebrews 11:32-40 - *³² And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets— ³³ who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, ³⁴ quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, were made strong out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. ³⁵ Women received back their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, so that they might rise again to a better life. ³⁶ Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. ³⁷ They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword. They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated— ³⁸ of whom the world was not worthy—wandering about in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. ³⁹ And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised, ⁴⁰ since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.*

God did not deliver James from martyrdom, but God did deliver Peter from it at that time, but he would later suffer martyrdom as well.

And the chapter ends with God's judgment – on Herod Agrippa I.

Herod thinks he has been politically shrewd and has the authority to do whatever he wishes with his subjects.

Without a second thought, he's begun to persecute the church of God.

But listen beloved – Be encouraged!

- **The church is God's purchased possession!**
- **He gave His Son's life to redeem it.**
- **The church is the bride of the Son of God.**
- **You don't harm His bride without there being consequences!**

Saul found that out!! (Ch. 9)

Herod is about to find out that you can't fight God and win.

He's about to get judged by the God he's ignored and offended!



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Herod was an unwitting tool of the Devil. But God uses the Devil to accomplish His greater purposes.

So: while this is clearly a Satanic attack against the early church it's also a providential outworking of God's holy purposes.

Think about the death of Jesus.

Nothing befalls us coincidentally, accidentally, or by chance,

London Baptist Confession of 1689 3:1: God hath decreed in himself, from all eternity, by the most wise and holy counsel of His own will, freely and unchangeably, all things, whatsoever comes to pass; yet so as thereby is God neither the author of sin nor hath fellowship with any therein; nor is violence offered to the will of the creature, nor yet is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established; in which appears his wisdom in disposing all things, and power and faithfulness in accomplishing his decree.

Herod didn't know it, but he was very involved with God. And it was about to kill him. "What you don't know, won't hurt you." Not so!

Maybe you're thinking to yourself, well I haven't done anything like Herod did, so I must be good with God.

Let me ask you today – have you repented of your sins and placed your faith in Christ? If not, you are in eternal danger, for God not only has power to deliver but also power to destroy both body and soul in hell.

Are you still bound with the chains of your sins? Are you still imprisoned in the stronghold of unbelief? Have you never seen the key in the Savior's hand that opened the door to set you free?

There is one of two things for you, either to be shut up in the prison of hell or else to be delivered from the prison of sin.

Your destiny hangs there – salvation or damnation, life or death.

So, I say to you - Trust Christ with your soul and He will save you! Trust Jesus, the Son of God, begotten of the Father, conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary, God over all, blessed forever.



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May His electing love move the hand of His effectual grace to incline you now to trust in Him and be a lawfully delivered captive.

PRAYER -