



# Book of Acts

## Chapter 12

*Death of James; arrest of Peter;  
Death of Herod*

**Michael Fronczak**  
**Bible Study Resource Center**  
**564 Schaeffer Dr.**  
**Coldwater, Michigan 49036**  
**[www.biblestudyresourcecenter.com](http://www.biblestudyresourcecenter.com)**

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**Theme:** Death of James; arrest of Peter

Antioch will now be the center, not Jerusalem. Jerusalem, as the center of the Church's operations, passes out of sight. It appears only two more times: Council regarding Gentile obligations (Ch 15); and Paul's visit, compelled to seek Roman protection for his life (Chapters 21,22).

**Introduction McGee:** In this chapter persecution strikes through Herod Agrippa I. James is executed and Peter is imprisoned—but is miraculously delivered. Herod dies by a judgment of God. Although persecution comes, the church grows and the Word of God is multiplied.<sup>1</sup>

**1–25** The Jerusalem Church Is Persecuted. Chapter 12 is the last chapter in Acts that tells of the Jerusalem church without reference to Paul's ministry.

**About this time (12:1)**

Luke next turns his attention to an important episode of persecution against the Jerusalem church, which results in one item of sad news, and another of joy. He relates the death of the apostle James (the brother of John) (12:2), Peter's arrest and miraculous escape from prison (12:3-19), and the death of Herod (12:19-23). As we shall see, the three events form one unit with a special message for readers.

These things apparently happen during the same general period of time as the growth of the church in Antioch (11:19-26), and before Paul's trip to Jerusalem (11:27-30). Using secular records, historians place Herod's death (12:20-23) in A.D. 44, while Paul's visit to Jerusalem (11:30) may be two years later. Therefore, in recording the events of chapter 12, Luke backtracks, going behind the story of the Antioch church and Paul's trip to Jerusalem.

The persecution of James and Peter may be connected to bringing Cornelius into the church fellowship. Hence, chapter 12 describes events beginning sometime soon after Peter's defense of his visit to Cornelius in front of the Jerusalem church (11:1-18).<sup>2</sup>

“The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous” (1 Peter 3:12).

“And His ears are open unto their prayers” (1 Peter 3:12).

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<sup>1</sup>McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:562). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>2</sup><http://www.wcg.org/lit/bible/acts/acts12.htm>

## **Acts 12:1**

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

**Barnes: Now about that time.** That is, during the time that the famine existed; or the time when Barnabas and Saul went up to Jerusalem. This was probably about the fifth or sixth year of the reign of Claudius, not far from A.D. 47.

**ESV: about that time.** See note on 11:24. Herod was Herod Agrippa I, a grandson of Herod the Great (see note on Matt. 2:1). He was reared in Rome, and because of boyhood playmates who later became emperors he was granted rule over various territories in Judea until his kingdom reached the full extent of his grandfather's territory (a.d. 41–44). See map. His persecution of the Christians may have been an attempt to curry favor with the Jews (cf. Acts 12:3).<sup>3</sup>

### **Herod Agrippa I**

He is the nephew of Herod Antipas who murdered John the Baptist. He is the grandson of Herod the Great, the son of Aristobulus and Bernice of the Maccabean or Hasmonean line; he was the murderer of the innocents at the birth of our Lord. (Paul will make his celebrated defense in Ch 26 before his son, Herod Agrippa II.)

Herod Agrippa was brought up in Rome with Caligula and Claudis. On the accession of Caligula to the empire, he obtained from him the dominions of this uncles, Philip and Herod Antipas - Batanaea, Tachonitis, and Auranitis (after the death of Philip); Galilee and Peraea (on the banishment of Antipas to Gaul); and Abilene with the title of the King.

On the accession of Claudius he was further invested with the sovereignty of Samaria and Judea; thus having at length all the dominions over which his grandfather (Herod the Great) had reigned, and from which he derived an immense revenue.

He was of Roman habits: lived for 30 years in Rome; boon companion in every kind of vice of the son of the emperor. Yet, he also had Jewish interests. He interceded when Caligula wanted to set up an image of himself in the Temple; Agrippa did try to persuade him not to!

Here was their last king, the sycophant of a child of Roman voluptuousness, an Edomite, attempting for political purposes to retain Jewish power, supremely given over to all manner of Greek frivolity; this man is the representative of the people whom God had offered to rule; this was the man who stretched forth his hand to vex the church of God and one of the first things he does is kill James.<sup>4</sup>

**[Herod the king]** This was Herod Agrippa, the son of Aristobulus, grandson of Herod the Great, nephew of Herod Antipas who killed John the Baptist, and brother to Herodias. He ruled nearly all that Herod the Great did.

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<sup>3</sup> ESV Study Bible (English Standard Bible)

<sup>4</sup> Chuck Missler notes on The Book of Acts, Khouse.org.

**BBC:** This Herod is Agrippa I, brother-in-law and son of a half-brother of Antipas, the Herod of the Gospels whose attempt to gain as much power as Agrippa cost him his own kingdom. (Antipas’s fatal jealousy of Agrippa was instigated by his own consort Herodias—Josephus *Antiquities* 18.7.1-2, 240-44, 250-54—although she had helped her brother Agrippa out after he had wasted all his money in Rome and returned to Palestine in debt—*Antiquities* 18.6.1-2, 143-49.) Herod Agrippa I had partied with Gaius Caligula in Rome; when Caligula became emperor, Agrippa I became the first official Jewish “king” since his grandfather Herod the Great. Because his grandmother Mariamne was a Hasmonean princess, he was Jewish as well as Idumean (in contrast to Herod the Great). He was thus very popular with the people, on behalf of whom he used his influence. He was pro-Pharisee and frequented the temple.<sup>5</sup>

**To vex certain of the Church**—That is, to destroy its chief ornaments and supports.

**McGee:** “Herod the king” is Herod Agrippa I, grandson of Herod the Great (who attempted to put the Lord Jesus to death at the time of His birth). There never was a family more at enmity against God. As far as we know, not a single member of the Herod family ever really turned to God.

You will recall that up to this point the persecution against the church had been largely from the religious rulers, the Sadducees in particular. Now it moves into the realm of government. Persecution swings from religion to politics. Perhaps Herod did this to gain favor with certain influential groups. We know that he stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church. The word *vexed* is hardly adequate to describe what he did. He carried on a brutal, unfeeling persecution of the church.<sup>6</sup>

**JNTC: King Herod** Agrippa I (11 B.C.E.–44 C.E.), ruler of all Israel, 41–44 C.E.; grandson of Herod the Great (Mt 2:1) through a son (Aristobulus) not mentioned in the New Testament; father of Herod Agrippa II (25:13–26:32). On his death, see vv. 22–23.<sup>7</sup>

**Spurgeon:** Troubles seldom come alone; first the famine, then persecution; the church can endure all things.

### **Apostles are persecuted**

Probably in the early spring of A.D. 43, or perhaps 44, Herod begins to persecute the church, particularly in Jerusalem. It appears that this time the apostles and leaders of the church are the intended victims. Herod is held responsible by the Roman authorities for keeping peace in Palestine. Almost certainly, then, he does not undertake the persecution without a reason, or apart from the desires of the Jewish authorities and populace in general.

The persecution of the apostles signals a definite change in the attitude of the Jewish community both in Jerusalem and Judea. Earlier, after Stephen’s death, the Hellenistic

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<sup>5</sup> Bible Background Commentary – New Testament

<sup>6</sup> McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:562). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>7</sup> Stern, D. H. (1996, c1992). *Jewish New Testament Commentary : A companion volume to the Jewish New Testament* (electronic ed.) (Ac 12:1). Clarksville: Jewish New Testament Publications.

Christian Jews were singled out for persecution. However, the apostles and Hebraic Jewish Christians were apparently not persecuted or suppressed (8:1). The apostles were still respected by the people since they remained observant Jews (3:1). As well, their miraculous works caused the populace to hold them in awe as God's instruments for good (3:9; 5:13). The Pharisees were cautious about persecuting the apostles (5:34-39); only the Sadducee-dominated Sanhedrin had threatened them.

What turns the people of Jerusalem and Judea against the apostles? The answer may lie with Peter's evangelizing work. First, he teaches among the despised Samaritans. Worse still, he fellowships with and baptizes the Gentile Cornelius, without requiring that he live as a Jew. We know that the church in Jerusalem quickly hears about Peter eating with "uncircumcised men," referring to Cornelius and those with him (11:3). He is severely criticized even by the Jewish Christians; the scandal is presumably much greater for unconverted Jews. The rumor quickly spreads that Peter allows "unclean" Gentiles to taint the community of Israel.

People may see Peter, and by implication the other apostles, as abandoning the Torah and committing a terrible offense against the community. All Jewish groups are united against the apostles. Together they enlist the help of Herod to rid the land of the heretic Peter and his co-workers. No doubt the Sanhedrin is more than willing to enter into a conspiracy with Herod against the apostles.

Peter's action has the potential to cause riots in Jerusalem, creating a problem for Herod, who is accountable to Rome for revolts and disturbances within his jurisdiction. He may feel threatened politically by the results of Peter's action, because the Jews are making an issue of it.

Agrippa's policy was the Pax Romana through the preservation of the status quo. He supported the majority within the land and ruthlessly suppressed minorities when they became disruptive. He viewed Jewish Christians as divisive and felt their activities could only disturb the people and inflame antagonisms. (Richard N. Longenecker, "Acts," *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, page 408)<sup>8</sup>

## **Acts 12:2**

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

James, the brother of John, also surnamed "Boanerges" (Son of Thunder). He is at the Transfiguration, the raising of Jairus' daughter and at the Garden of Gethsemane. Herod Agrippa kills James with a sword. Even though he had Rome behind him, he was an Edomite and was anxious to win favor with the leadership of the Jews.

**[James]** This was James the greater, James the son of Zebedee. He should be distinguished from James the less, son of Alphaeus. Here Matthew 20:23 is fulfilled in that the cup of suffering and death had been James, the brother of John, also surnamed "Boanerges" (Son of Thunder). He is at the Transfiguration, the raising of Jairus' daughter and at the Garden of Gethsemane. drunk. This left 11 apostles. No successor for

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<sup>8</sup> <http://www.wcg.org/lit/bible/acts/acts12.htm>

James was ever chosen. In fact, none of these 11 were ever followed by others in office. This James with his brother John were those who requested to sit on the right and left hand of our Lord, see Matthew 20:23; and our Lord's prediction was now fulfilled in one of them, who by his martyrdom drank of our Lord's cup, and was baptized with his baptism. By the death of James, the number of the apostles was reduced to eleven; and we do not find that ever it was filled up. The apostles never had any successors: God has continued their doctrine, but not their order.

By killing with the sword we are to understand beheading. Among the Jews there were four kinds of deaths:

1. Stoning;
2. burning;
3. killing with the sword, or beheading; and,
4. strangling.

The third was a Roman as well as a Jewish mode of punishment. Killing with the sword was the punishment which, according to the Talmud, was inflicted on those who drew away the people to any strange worship, Sanhedr. fol. iii. James was probably accused of this, and hence the punishment mentioned in the text.

**[John]** This is the last reference to John.

**LAN:** James and John were two of the original 12 disciples who followed Jesus. They had asked Jesus for special recognition in his kingdom (Mark 10:35-40). Jesus said that to be a part of his kingdom would mean suffering with Jesus (drink from the same cup—Mark 10:38-39). James and John did indeed suffer—Herod executed James, and later John was exiled (see Rev. 1:9).<sup>9</sup>

**ESV:** The martyred **James** was Jesus' disciple, son of Zebedee and brother of John, not to be confused with James, the brother of Jesus and author of the book of James, who became a prominent leader in the Jerusalem church (see note on v. 17). Jesus had predicted his suffering (Mark 10:39).

**[sword]** Death by the sword was regarded by the rabbis as particularly disgraceful, hence they were very pleased (Acts 12:3). Formerly performed with an ax, in this period beheading was performed with the sword and was the more merciful form of execution given to Roman citizens and others for whom crucifixion was considered too cruel. As king, Agrippa had the right of life and death that had been denied the Sanhedrin before and after him. Like Judaism, early Christians believed that death did not come apart from the sovereign purpose of God.

2-11 Why did God allow James to die and yet miraculously save Peter? Life is full of difficult questions like this. Why is one child physically disabled and another child athletically gifted? Why do people die seemingly before realizing their potential? These are questions we cannot possibly answer in this life because we do not see all that God sees. He has chosen to allow evil in this world for a time. But we can trust God's leading

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<sup>9</sup> Life Application Notes

because he has promised to destroy all evil eventually. In the meantime, we know that God will help us use our suffering to strengthen us and glorify him. For more on this question, see the notes on Job 1:1ff; ▪Job 2:10; ▪Job 3:23-26.

The fact is stated so bluntly—he killed James with the sword. James becomes another martyr in the church. He is the second martyr who is named. I am of the opinion that there had been many others who had already died for the name of the Lord Jesus.

### **James, the brother of John (12:2)**

To deal with the problem, Herod Agrippa I arrests some of the church leaders at Jerusalem. He singles out James, the brother of John, and has him killed. When the Jews voice their pleasure at this, Herod imprisons Peter, intending to put him on trial after Passover (12:3-4).

It's not clear why James is singled out first. Perhaps as one of the "sons of thunder" he thundered out a Stephen-like defense of Peter's action before Jewish groups. Perhaps he is chosen as an object lesson to the others. It is obvious that Herod means business, and that it is curtains for Peter unless God intervenes.

Herod wants to get into the good graces of his Jewish subjects. But he knows that they hate him and his family, so he takes whatever opportunity he can find to gain their affection. In Jerusalem, Herod even acts the part of an observant Jew. Now, a new ploy is available. Executing the leaders of the heretical Christian community will (he hopes) make his subjects more favorably disposed toward him.

In his short reign of three years (A.D. 41-4) he sought to counter the distaste on the part of the Jewish religious leaders for his Roman background and Edomite ancestry by his sedulous observance of Jewish customs and support of the Jewish faith; it was, no doubt, as part of this policy that he sought to win general approval by this attack on the Nazarenes [the Christians]. (William Neil, *The Acts of the Apostles*, page 148)

By beheading James, Herod is making a gesture of solidarity with the Jewish majority. It is a public relations ploy to demonstrate his loyalty to Judaism.<sup>10</sup>

### **Acts 12:3**

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

**[take Peter also]** Fourth arrest of Peter (Acts 4:3; Acts 5:18-19,25).

Peter was arrested during the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the week-long festival directly following Passover. This was a strategic move, since more Jews were in the city than usual, and Herod could impress the most people.

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<sup>10</sup> <http://www.wcg.org/lit/bible/acts/acts12.htm>

**Clarke: He proceeded—to take Peter also**—He supposed that these two were pillars on which the infant cause rested; and that, if these were removed, the building must necessarily come down.<sup>11</sup>

**Barnes: To take Peter also.** Peter was one of the most conspicuous men in the church. He had made himself particularly obnoxious by his severe and pungent discourses, and by his success in winning men to Christ. It was natural, therefore, that he should be the next object of attack.

**Clarke: The days of unleavened bread**—About the latter end of March or beginning of April; but whether in the third or fourth year of the Emperor Claudius, or earlier or later, cannot be determined.

**Barnes: Why this season was selected is not known.** As it was, however, a season of religious solemnity, and as Herod was desirous of showing his attachment to the *religious* rites of the nation, (Josephus, Ant., b. xix., chap. 7, \_ 3,) it is probable that he chose this period to show to them more impressively his purpose to oppose all false religions, and to maintain the existing establishments of the nation.

**BBC:** Luke may mention the Feast of Unleavened Bread to recall to the reader the time of Jesus' execution (Luke 22:7) or because Peter could not avoid being seen in Jerusalem during the feast; if Luke had meant it only as a chronological detail, he would probably have also indicated the year in Agrippa's reign. Although Agrippa gave generously to Gentiles outside Judea, his policies made him much more popular with his Jewish subjects (to whose majority whims he catered) than with his pagan subjects.

**McGee:** James is slain, but Peter will be miraculously preserved in all of this. Here we find an example of the sovereign will of God moving in the church. I'm sure there were many who asked, "Why in the world was James put to death and Peter permitted to live? Why would God do that?" Many ask that same question today. The answer is that this is the sovereign will of God. He still moves like this in the contemporary church. I have been in the ministry for many years, and I have seen the Lord reach in and take certain wonderful members out of the church by death. And then there are others whom He has left. Why would He do that? If He had asked me, from my viewpoint as the pastor, I would say that He took the wrong one and He left the wrong one! But life and death are in the hands of a sovereign God. When you and I rebel against His decision, it is simply too bad for us. This is His universe, not ours. It is God's church, not ours. The hand of a sovereign God moves in the church.

James apparently was one of the heads of the church in Jerusalem. God permits Herod to slay him. Peter must have been a leader, too. God permits him to live.<sup>12</sup>

**ESV:** Why this pleased the Jews is not specified. Perhaps the persecution following Stephen's death (8:1) had escalated. The days of Unleavened Bread, the seven days

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<sup>11</sup> Adam Clarke's Commentary on the New Testament

<sup>12</sup> McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:562). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.



following the Passover meal, were considered holy and not to be desecrated by an execution.

### **Acts 12:4**

**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 to bring him forth to the people.**

“Easter” - Passover in the original.

**[quaternions]** Greek: *tetradion* (GSN-5069), a body of four. Only here. Four soldiers guarded him for each of the four watches. He was chained to two and guarded by two others (Acts 12:6). That is, sixteen guards in all.

**[Easter]** Greek: *pascha* (GSN-3957), the Passover, as translated in 26 other places (after the Passover) (Matthew 26:2-19; Mark 14:1-16; Luke 2:41; Luke 22:1-15; John 2:13,23; John 6:4; John 11:55; John 12:1; John 13:1; John 18:28,39; John 19:14; 2 Cor. 5:7; Hebrews 11:28). This is an unfortunate and absurd translation, as Easter was a pagan festival observed long before Christ. It is not a Christian name, but is derived from Ishtar, one of the Babylonian titles of an idol goddess, the Queen of Heaven. The Saxon goddess Eastre is the same as the Astarte, the Syrian Venus, called Ashtoreth in the Old Testament. It was the worship of this woman by Israel that was such an abomination to God (1 Samuel 7:3; 1 Kings 11:5,33; 2 Kings 23:13; Jeremiah 7:18; Jeremiah 44:18). Round cakes, imprinted with the sign of the cross were made at this festival, the sign being, in the Babylonian mysteries, a sign of life. Easter eggs which play a great part in this day's celebration were common in all heathen nations. The fable of the egg declares that "an egg of wondrous size fell from heaven into the river Euphrates; the fish rolled it to the bank, where doves settled upon it and hatched it; and out came Astarte, or Ishtar, the goddess of Easter." Easter, Christmas, Lady Day, Lent, and other Babylonian festivals were all borrowed from this religion and were all observed centuries before Christ. None of them have any relationship to Christ or Christianity. <sup>13</sup>

**Clarke:** The Saxon *Earten*, *Eartne*, *Eartno*, *Eartna*, and *Eartnon* are different modes of spelling the name of the goddess Easter, whose festival was celebrated by our pagan forefathers on the month of April; hence that month, in the Saxon calendar, is called Easter month. Every view we can take of this subject shows the gross impropriety of retaining a name every way exceptionable, and palpably absurd.

**Barnes: Intending after Easter.** There never was a more absurd or unhappy translation than this. The original is simply *after the Passover*. The word *Easter* now denotes the festival observed by many Christian churches in honour of the resurrection of the Saviour. But the original has no reference to that; nor is there the slightest evidence that any such festival was observed at the time when this book was written. The translation is

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<sup>13</sup> Dake Study Notes, Dake's Study Bible

not only unhappy, as it does not convey at all the meaning of the original, but because it may contribute to foster an opinion that such a festival was observed in the times of the apostles. The word *Easter* is of Saxon origin, and is supposed to be derived from *Eostre*, the goddess of love, or the Venus of the North, in honour of whom a festival was celebrated by our pagan ancestors in the month of April. (*Webster.*) As this festival coincided with the Passover of the Jews, and with the feast observed by Christians in honour of the resurrection of Christ, the name came to be used to denote the latter. In the old Anglo-Saxon service-books the term *Easter* is used frequently to translate the word Passover. In the translation by Wicliffe, the word *paske*, i.e., passover, is used. But Tindal and Coverdale used the word *Easter*, and hence it has very improperly crept into our translation.

**Barnes: To bring him forth to the people.** That is, evidently, to put him publicly to death to gratify them. The providence of God, in regard to Peter, is thus remarkable. Instead of his being put suddenly to death, as was James, he was reserved for *future* trial; and thus an abundant opportunity was given for the prayers of the church, and for his consequent release.

**JNTC:** *Pesach*, Greek *pascha*. It appears 29 times? in the New Testament, but for some inexplicable reason KJV here translates it “Easter”—here alone! Of course the reference is to Passover (see Mt 26:2N).

Herod did not want to arouse public opinion against himself by trying a leader of a significant Jewish minority community during the holy season.<sup>14</sup>

**ESV:** The **prison** was probably the Tower of Antonia, which was at the northwestern corner of the temple complex and was the quarters of the Roman garrison. The use of four squads of soldiers reflects Roman practice: one squad of four soldiers for each of the four three-hour watches of the night. Passover refers to the entire spring festival that unites Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

### **Acts 12:5**

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

Peter is in prison but there are two forces at work:  
Kept in prison by Herod

Prayer made earnestly of the Church. Another translation would be “but prayer was made earnestly of the church unto God for him.” They didn’t come before God with a kind of grocery-list prayer. They went before God and earnestly prayed that this man Simon Peter be delivered. Their hearts were in their prayers.  
The contrast is obvious: Peter was bound, but prayer was loosed!

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<sup>14</sup>Stern, D. H. (1996, c1992). *Jewish New Testament Commentary : A companion volume to the Jewish New Testament* (electronic ed.) (Ac 12:4). Clarksville: Jewish New Testament Publications.

**Clarke: Prayer was made without ceasing**—The Greek word signifies both fervor and earnestness, as well as perseverance. These prayers of the Church produced that miraculous interference mentioned below, and without which Peter could not have thus escaped from the hands of this ruthless king.

**Barnes: But prayer was made.** The church was apprized of his imprisonment and danger; and had no resource but to apply to God by prayer. In scenes of danger there is no other refuge; and the result shows that, even in most discouraging circumstances, God can hear prayer. Nothing scarcely could appear more hopeless than the idea of rescuing Peter out of the hands of Herod, and out of the prison, and out of the custody of sixteen men, by prayer. But the prayer of faith was prevalent with God.

**Barnes: Without ceasing.** Intense, steady, ardent prayer. The word here used, *εκτενης*, is found in but one other place in the New Testament. 1 Peter 4:8: "Have *fervent* charity among yourselves." The word has rather the idea that their prayer was *earnest* and *fervent*, than that it was constant.

Herod's plan undoubtedly was to execute Peter, but the believers were praying for Peter's safety. The earnest prayer of the church significantly affected the outcome of these events. Prayer changes things, so pray often and with confidence.

**JNTC:** A five-point teaching on **prayer**: Prayer must be (1) **intense**, not casual; (2) ongoing (**was being made**; the Greek verb tense implies continuing activity); (3) **to God**—in genuine contact with the living God (possible only through Yeshua, Yn 14:6), not with empty repetition (Mt 6:7) and not in unbelief (MJ 11:6); (4) specific, not vague (**on his behalf**); "you don't receive because you don't ask" (Ya 4:2–3); and (5) communal (**by the Messianic community**)—the believer is not called to an isolated life; even his private prayers should be not self-centered but reflective of his membership in the Body of the Messiah.<sup>15</sup>

**Peter** was arrested and slated to be executed like James (v. 2). However, Peter's execution was delayed because it was against Jewish law to have a trial or sentencing during the Feast of Unleavened Bread, better known as Passover. This was Peter's third arrest (4:3; 5:18). During a previous incarceration, Peter had miraculously escaped with the help of an angel of the Lord who opened the gates of the prison (5:19, 20). This time Peter was placed under maximum security in the care of four squads of soldiers of four men each. The soldiers worked three-hour shifts. Both of Peter's wrists were chained, and he had a soldier on each side. Outside Peter's cell, two more soldiers stood guard.<sup>16</sup>

**Spurgeon:** What a blessed "but"! Constant guards were baffled by constant prayer. Some would have said, "what can prayer do?" but the early church was not afflicted with such skepticism; they prayed on, and Herod was foiled.

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<sup>15</sup>Stern, D. H. (1996, c1992). *Jewish New Testament Commentary : A companion volume to the Jewish New Testament* (electronic ed.) (Ac 12:5). Clarksville: Jewish New Testament Publications.

<sup>16</sup>Nelson Study Bible

The mention of **earnest prayer** continues Luke's emphasis that every step in building the church is due to God's blessing and supernatural intervention.

### **Church prays earnestly (12:5)**

While Peter is in prison, the church is "earnestly praying to God for him" (12:5). Here and throughout Acts Luke points out to his readers that prayer is central to the life of the church. In this case, the Jerusalem church is facing a life-threatening crisis. There is no doubt as to what Herod, and the Sanhedrin with him, are intending to do. The goal is to eliminate the leaders of the church and persecute the believers who accept Gentiles.

The church has no weapons against the forces arrayed against it. Their only recourse is to depend on God to make his will known, with the hope that Peter will be rescued and the church saved. Meanwhile, the apostle is languishing in the dungeon. Herod takes every precaution to make sure that Peter does not escape — he probably knows about Peter's former escape (5:19-24).

Peter is probably in the Antonia fortress, the military barracks where Paul is later confined (21:31-23:32). The fortress overlooks the temple. Peter is guarded by four squads of four soldiers each, probably on a rotating basis. He sleeps bound with two chains between two soldiers, with sentries standing guard at the entrance of his cell.

Luke notes that Peter is sleeping peacefully on the eve of his trial and execution (12:6). He has faith in his Savior that whatever happens to him, his life is safe in Christ. Perhaps he also remembers that Jesus said he would live to old age (John 21:18).<sup>17</sup>

### **Acts 12:6**

**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.**

Cf. A sinner's condition: asleep, indifferent, bound in the chains of our sins, guarded by Satan's emissaries, doomed to die. He can do nothing for himself; saved by a messenger from heaven...

**Sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains**—Two soldiers guarded Peter; his right hand being bound to the left hand of one, and his left hand bound to the right hand of the other. This was the Roman method of guarding their prisoners, and appears to be what is written in the text.

Prisoners who were chained between guards (as often they were—Acts 21:33; cf. Acts 28:16, 20) had no human hope of escaping.

**And when Herod would have brought him forth.** When he was about to bring him to be put to death.

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<sup>17</sup> <http://www.wcg.org/lit/bible/acts/acts12.htm>

**Barnes: The same night.** That is, the night *preceding*. The intention of Herod was to bring him out as soon as the Passover was over; but during the night which immediately preceded the day in which Herod intended to bring him to punishment, Peter was rescued.

**Barnes: Peter was sleeping.** Here is an instance of remarkable composure, and one of the effects of peace of conscience and of confidence in God. It was doubtless known to Peter what the intention of Herod was. James had just been put to death; and Peter had no reason to expect a better fate. And yet in this state he slept as quietly as if there had been no danger, and was roused even by an *angel* to contemplate his condition, and to make his escape. There is nothing that will give quiet rest and gentle sleep so certainly as a conscience void of offence; and in the midst of imminent dangers, he who confides in God may rest securely and calmly.

**McGee:** How could Simon Peter sleep between two soldiers? Remember that he went to sleep also in the Garden of Gethsemane. I would say that Simon Peter was not troubled with insomnia. He didn't have any difficulty sleeping. It seems he could sleep just about any place and any time. What a wonderful confidence he must have had in God to be able to sleep between these two soldiers!<sup>18</sup>

**Peter** was so trusting the Lord that he was sound asleep the night before his trial (cf. 1 Peter 2:23; 5:7). He did not fear for his life because Christ had said he would live to an old age (John 21:18).<sup>19</sup>

**Barnes: And the keepers,** etc. See Acts 12:4. Two soldiers were stationed at the door. We may see now that every possible precaution was used to insure the safe custody of Peter.

- (1.) He was in prison.
- (2.) He was in the charge of sixteen men, who could relieve each other when weary, and thus every security was given that he could not escape by inattention or weariness on their part.
- (3.) He was bound fast between two men. And
- (4.) he was further guarded by two others, whose business it was to watch the door of the prison. It is to be remembered, also, that it was death for a Roman soldier to be found sleeping at his post. And in this way every possible security was given for the safe keeping of Peter. But God can deliver in spite of all the precautions of men; and it is easy for him to overcome the most cunning devices of his enemies.

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<sup>18</sup>McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:563). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

cf. *confer*, compare

<sup>19</sup>Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-c1985). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (2:385). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

## **Acts 12:7**

**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]** One of the ministering spirits of Hebrews 1:14. This is the second time Peter was liberated from prison by an angel (Acts 5:19).

If you were chained to two Roman soldiers and facing the possibility of being executed the next day, would you sleep very soundly? Probably not, but Peter did. In fact, Peter was so sound asleep that the angel had to strike him on the side to wake him up!<sup>20</sup>

**[his chains fell off from his hands]** Four notable miracles here (Dake):

1. Helplessness of the guards
2. Chains falling off (Acts 12:7)
3. Going through three gates without notice
4. Automatic opening of the gates (Acts 12:10)<sup>21</sup>

**Barnes: And a light shined in the prison.** Many have supposed that this was lightning. But *light*, and *splendour*, and shining apparel, are commonly represented as the accompaniments of the heavenly beings when they visit the earth, Luke 2:9, 24:4. Comp. Mark 9:3. It is highly probable that this light was discerned only by Peter; and it would be to him an undoubted proof of the Divine interposition in his behalf.

**Barnes: And his chains,** This could have been only by Divine power. No natural means were used, or could have been used without arousing the guard. It is a sublime expression of the *ease* with which God can deliver from danger, and rescue his friends. Comp. Acts 16:26.

God sent an angel to rescue Peter. Angels are God's messengers. They are divinely created beings with supernatural powers, and they sometimes take on human appearance in order to talk to people. Angels should not be worshiped, because they are not divine. They are God's servants, just as we are.

**McGee:** The angel tells him to do a very reasonable thing—get dressed. There was nothing in the way of alarm, just sensible directions. Peter thought the whole thing was a dream, and he would have walked out of there without his shoes!<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>Wiersbe, W. W. (1996, c1989). *The Bible exposition commentary*. "An exposition of the New Testament comprising the entire 'BE' series"--Jkt. (Ac 12:5). Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books.

<sup>21</sup>Dake Study Notes, Dake's Study Bible

<sup>22</sup>McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:563). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

### **Acts 12:8**

**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.**

**Clarke: Gird thyself**—It seems Peter had put off the principal part of his clothes, that he might sleep with more comfort. His resuming all that he had thrown off was a proof that every thing had been done leisurely. There was no evidence of any hurry; nor of any design to elude justice, or even to avoid meeting his accusers in any legal way. It appears that the two soldiers were overwhelmed by a deep sleep, which fell upon them from God.

### **Acts 12:9**

**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.**

**Clarke: He—wist not**—He knew not; from the Anglo-Saxon, to know. He supposed himself to be in a dream.

**Barnes: Saw a vision.** That is, was a representation made to his mind, similar to that which he had seen before. Comp. Acts 10:11,12. It was so astonishing, so unexpected, so wonderful, that he could not realize that it was true.

On miraculous escapes see comment on Acts 5:19-20. Agrippa wielded much more direct power than the Sanhedrin had, and his guards were much more efficient. In a popular Greek story, Dionysus had made chains drop off and locked doors open; doors opening “by themselves” appear in ancient literature from Homer to Josephus. Thus we can understand why Peter might think he is dreaming.

### **Acts 12:10**

**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.**

**[own accord]** Greek: *automatos* (GSN-844), automatically (Mark 4:28).

**[angel departed from him]** The angel departed when he was no longer needed. Angels are always businesslike and never tarry beyond the time their work is completed.

**Clarke: The first and—second ward**—It is supposed that ancient Jerusalem was surrounded by three walls: if so, then passing through the gates of these three walls successively is possibly what is meant by the expression in the text. The prison in which he was confined might have been that which was at the outer wall.

**Clarke: Iron gate**—This was in the innermost wall of the three, and was strongly plated over with iron, for the greater security. In the east, the gates are often thus secured to the present day. Pitts says so of the gates of Algiers; and Pocock, of some near Antioch. Perhaps this is all that is meant by the iron gate. One of the quaternions of soldiers was placed at each gate.

**Which opened—of his own accord**—Influenced by the unseen power of the angel.

**McGee:** They certainly had enough guards to keep Peter in prison. I really think that they expected something like this. You remember that the Lord Jesus had come forth from the grave. That was a source of real embarrassment to them. They do not intend to let something like that happen to them again. So they more than doubled the guard.

Remember that the church in Jerusalem is praying for Simon Peter while this is happening. As soon as Peter is out of danger, the angel lets Peter go on his own.

Let me call attention to the fact that the translation in verse 7 should be *an* angel of the Lord and not *the* angel of the Lord. *The* angel of the Lord in the Old Testament referred to the preincarnate Christ. Jesus Christ is now at God's right hand in His glorified body. It was not the Lord Jesus who came down to deliver Peter. It was an angel whom the Lord Jesus had sent. The prayers of the church are definitely answered.<sup>23</sup>

### **Acts 12:11**

**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.***

**[come to himself]** Peter was in a state of ecstasy not being fully aware that his deliverance was real until the angel left (Acts 12:9).

**[expectation of the people of the Jews]** The Jews were looking forward to seeing Peter killed as James was (Acts 12:2-3).

**Barnes: And when Peter was come to himself.** This expression naturally means, when he had overcome his amazement and astonishment at the unexpected deliverance, so as to be capable of reflection. He had been amazed by the whole transaction. He thought it was a vision; and in the suddenness and rapidity with which it was done, he had no time for cool reflection. The events of Divine Providence often overwhelm and amaze us; and such are their suddenness, and rapidity, and unexpected character in their development, as to confound us, and prevent calm and collected reflection.

**Of a surety.** Certainly; surely. He considered all the circumstances; he saw that he was actually at liberty and that it could have been effected only by Divine interposition.

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<sup>23</sup>McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:563). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.



## **Acts 12:12**

**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.**

Mary, mother of the writer of Gospel of Mark. Her brother was Barnabas (Col 4:10), also a man of substance (4:37).

**[Mary the mother of John]** One of six Mary's.

Six Mary's are mentioned in the New Testament and two Miriam's in the Old Testament (Exodus 15:20; 1 Chron. 4:17). The Mary's are: mother of Jesus (always clear); Mary Magdalene (Luke 8:2; Luke 24:10); sister of Lazarus (Matthew 26:7; Luke 10:39-42; John 11; John 12:3); mother of James (John 19:25; Matthew 27:56; Mark 15:40); mother of Mark (Acts 12:12); a helper of Paul (Romans 16:6).

**[John, whose surname was Mark]** John Mark the author of the gospel of Mark. He was nephew of Barnabas (Col. 4:10) and a disciple of Jesus (Acts 12:12). Paul and Barnabas took him on the first missionary journey but he got homesick and left the party (Acts 12:25; Acts 13:5,13). Paul and Barnabas separated over Mark when they started on the second missionary journey (Acts 15:33-39). He was a convert of Peter (1 Peter 5:13). He later worked with Paul (Col. 4:10-11; 2 Tim. 4:11; Philemon 1:24).

**Clarke: And when he had considered**—When he had weighed every thing, and was fully satisfied of the Divine interposition, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John Mark, the author of the Gospel, where it appears many were gathered together making prayer and supplication, and probably for Peter's release.

**Barnes: Where many were gathered together praying.** This was in the *night*; and it shows the propriety of observing extraordinary seasons of prayer, even in the night. Peter was to have been put to death the next day; and they assembled to pray for his release, and did not intermit their prayers. When dangers increase around us and our friends, we should become more fervent in prayer. While life remains we may pray; and even when there is no human hope, and we may have no power to heal or deliver, still God may interpose, as he did here, in answer to prayer.

**BBC:** A home with an outer gate, a servant girl who could serve as a porter and a gathering much farther back in the house would suggest the home of a fairly wealthy resident of Jerusalem's Upper City. (For another indication of the family's wealth, cf. Col. 4:10 with Acts 4:36-37. As Levites—Acts 4:36—they may have had ties with the priestly aristocracy; many well-to-do priests lived in the Upper City.) Thus the home is not far from the temple mount (hence not far from the fortress Antonia, where Peter may have been held). Believers met in homes rather than church buildings for the first three centuries of the church (e.g., Romans 16:5), just as some poorer Jews did who could not afford synagogues.

“Mark” is a Latin name, but as a *praenomen* it need not indicate Roman citizenship; still, the use of the name hardly indicates antipathy toward Rome or its interests in Jerusalem, and may again suggest the family’s wealth.

**McGee:** The church at this particular time, and for about a hundred and fifty years after this, did not have church buildings. Today, when we talk of a church, we usually mean a building. We say, “The First So-and-So church is on the corner of Main and So-and-So.” Actually, that is not a church at all; it is a building in which the church meets. The church is the body of believers. At the beginning the church never met in a public building. They had none. They met in homes.

Now Mary, the mother of John Mark, apparently was a woman of means and had a home large enough for the church to meet there. They were gathered together praying for Simon Peter to be delivered.<sup>24</sup>

This verse introduces the reader to John **Mark** who figures prominently in Paul’s first missionary journey. Evidently his mother **Mary** was a woman of prominence and means. Probably her house was a principal meeting place of the church, so it must have been spacious. Because John Mark’s father is not named, Mary may have been a widow. This same Mark is considered to be the writer of the Gospel bearing his name (cf. Mark 14:51-52; 1 Peter 5:13).<sup>25</sup>

**JNTC: The house of Miryam.** Believers met in each other’s homes for prayer, worship and fellowship arising from their common trust in Yeshua (2:46, 8:3). New-Testament-based prayer groups, home Bible studies and house congregations reflect this emphasis today. Within Judaism the *chavurah* (friendship-group) movement similarly fosters awareness of one another.

**Yochanan (surnamed Mark).** According to Co 4:10 he was a cousin of Bar-Nabba (see 4:36–37; 13:5, 13; 15:37–39. A marginal note in an early manuscript identifies him with Mark, author of the second Gospel, and Lucius from Cyrene (13:1) with Luke himself; and this is the prevailing opinion among scholars.<sup>26</sup>

**Spurgeon:** He knew where the brethren prayed, and expected to find them there, and so he did. If he were to come now would he find church members at prayer meetings? Alas, many of them never go to what they wickedly call "only a prayer meeting."

**ESV: John whose other name was Mark** will be a major figure in the next three chapters, going with Paul and Barnabas on the first part of their first missionary journey but then leaving them (see v. 25; 13:5, 13). This was a cause of contention between Paul and Barnabas (see 15:37, 39). Mark regained Paul's favor later (see Col. 4:10; 2 Tim.

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<sup>24</sup>McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:563). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

cf. *confer*, compare

<sup>25</sup>Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-c1985). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (2:385). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

<sup>26</sup>Stern, D. H. (1996, c1992). *Jewish New Testament Commentary : A companion volume to the Jewish New Testament* (electronic ed.) (Ac 12:12). Clarksville: Jewish New Testament Publications.

4:11; Philem. 24). Mark accompanied Peter (see 1 Pet. 5:13), and there is substantial testimony from the early church that he wrote the Gospel of Mark.

### **Mary, mother of Mark (12:12)**

After his release, Peter heads for the place where a house-church of the Jerusalem congregation is meeting. This one is in the home of Mary, the mother of Mark (12:12). (The fact that she is mentioned as the head of the household indicates that she is a widow.) This is apparently a sizable home, for it contains "many people" gathered there (12:12). Mary has at least one house servant, Rhoda. Obviously, the faithful Christian Jews did not sell all their possessions to donate to the common fund (2:44-45; 4:32-35). Donations are made on an as-needed basis and do not necessarily involve selling everything one owns. The fact that Mary keeps this home turns out to be a great and continuing benefit to the church in that it now has a place to meet.

As for Mary's son, he has both a Jewish name (John) and a Roman one (Mark), as do various other characters in Acts, including Paul (1:23; 13:9). John Mark will become an important figure in Luke's story. He will accompany Barnabas and Paul to Antioch after they complete their relief-mission to Jerusalem (12:25). Then, he will accompany the pair on their first missionary journey (13:5). However, for some reason, Mark will abandon the mission and return to Jerusalem (13:13). This will result in a contentious split between Barnabas and Paul (15:37-39). In later years, both Paul and Peter will mention a person named Mark as a co-worker in their missionary work (2 Timothy 4:11; Philemon 24; 1 Peter 5:12). He is thought to be the Mark mentioned here.

Post-apostolic Christian writers refer to Mark as "the interpreter of Peter" and the founder of the church in Alexandria. Eusebius (c. A.D. 260-339), bishop of Caesarea, regarded by his contemporaries as the greatest Christian scholar of his time and "the father of church history," recounts a number of traditions about Mark. Among other things, he is called "the companion" and "interpreter" of Peter, as well as the writer of a Gospel at Rome (*Ecclesiastical History* 2.15-16; 3.39; 5.8; 6.14).<sup>27</sup>

### **Acts 12:13**

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

[**Rhoda**] Rhoda means Rose.

**Clarke: As Peter knocked**—The door was probably shut for fear of the Jews; and, as most of the houses in the east have an area before the door, it might have been at this outer gate that Peter stood knocking.

**Clarke: A damsel came to hear, named Rhoda**—She came to inquire who was there. Rhoda signifies a rose; and it appears to have been customary with the Jews, as Grotius and others remark, to give the names of flowers and trees to their daughters: thus Susannah signifies a lily, Hadassah, a myrtle, Tamar, a palm tree, etc., etc.

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<sup>27</sup> <http://www.wcg.org/lit/bible/acts/acts12.htm>

“To hearken” means that she came to the door to listen. These were days of persecution. It was important to know who was knocking. *Rhoda* means “rose”; she was probably a servant girl.

### **Acts 12:14**

**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.**

**[knew Peter's voice]** She knew his voice because of hearing him preach and because Peter was a good friend of the family, often visiting and perhaps living some with the family of Mary and John Mark.

**She opened not the gate.** At this time of night, and in these circumstances, the door would be fastened. Christians were doubtless alarmed by the death of James, and the imprisonment of Peter, and they would take all possible precautions for their own safety.

Because these believers had probably prayed after James’s capture, and he had been executed, their uncertain faith is perhaps understandable. But given the purpose for this prayer meeting (Acts 12:5), their surprise (and Peter’s having to keep pounding on the gate—which could wake up some of the other neighbors, who are probably from aristocratic priestly families and hence dangerous) is ironic enough that ancient readers may have laughed. In some popular Jewish traditions the righteous would become like angels after death.

### **Acts 12:15**

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

**[mad]** Greek: *mainomai* (GSN-3105). Here; Acts 26:24-25; John 10:20; 1 Cor. 14:23. They were praying constantly for Peter's release and yet could not believe it when prayer was answered (Acts 12:15-16).

**[It is his angel]** Jews believed in guardian angels, so they concluded that this was what was knocking—Peter's angel. However, they seemed in no hurry to let his angel in.

**Clarke: It is his angel**—It was a common opinion among the Jews that every man has a guardian angel, and in the popish Church it is an article of faith. The Jews also believed that angels often assumed the likeness of particular persons. They have many stories of the appearance of Elijah in the likeness of different rabbins. As *angelos* signifies in general a messenger, whether Divine or human, some have thought that the angel or messenger here means a servant or person which the disciples supposed was sent from Peter to announce something of importance to the brethren: it was also an opinion among the Jews, even in the time of the apostles, as appears from Philo, that the departed souls

of good men officiated as ministering angels; and it is possible that the disciples at Mary's house might suppose that Peter had been murdered in the prison; and that his spirit was now come to announce this event, or give some particular warning to the Church.

**Barnes: Thou art mad.** Thou art insane. They seem to have regarded his rescue as so difficult and so hopeless, that they deemed it proof of derangement that she now affirmed it. And yet this was the very thing for which they had been so earnestly praying. When it was now announced to them that the object of their prayers was granted, they deemed the messenger that announced it insane. Christians are often surprised even when their prayers are answered. They are overwhelmed and amazed at the success of their own petitions, and are slow to believe that the very thing for which they have sought could be granted. It shows, perhaps, with how *little faith*, after all, they pray; and how slow they are to believe that God can hear and answer prayer. In a revival of religion, in answer to prayer, Christians are often overwhelmed, and astonished when even their own petitions are granted, and when God manifests his own power in his own way and time. Prayer should be persevered in, and we should place ourselves in a waiting posture to catch the first indications that God has heard us with joy.

**McGee:** When she tells them Peter is at the gate, they tell her she is crazy. “No,” she tells them, “Peter is at the gate.” “Well, did you see him?” “No, I didn’t open the gate but I heard him, and I know his voice.” “Oh,” they say, “it’s his spirit.” The word *angel* is *pneuma*, which really means “spirit” rather than angel. They are not saying that he has a guardian angel. They think it is his spirit. In other words, they think Peter is dead, that he has been slain by Herod.

It is interesting that while the church is praying for Simon Peter to be delivered, he is delivered; but when it happens, they don’t believe it. They think he has been slain and it is his spirit which has appeared.

It is a great comfort to me that the early church, with all of its tremendous spiritual power, did not believe that their prayers had been answered on this occasion. They didn’t believe that Simon Peter had actually been delivered. Isn’t that same thing true of us so many times? When we do have an answer to our prayer, we rejoice and talk about it as if we are really surprised. And we are surprised—to be honest, we really didn’t expect an answer. Yet God heard and answered our prayer. How gracious He is!

“But Peter continued knocking.” That’s just like Peter. Nobody’s opening the gate because they don’t believe their prayers have been answered—they are in there arguing whether it is Peter or whether it is his spirit. Peter wants in and he is about to knock that gate down!<sup>28</sup>

The story of **Peter’s** unsuspected arrival at John Mark’s home is filled with humor and human interest. Joy in the Book of Acts is also evident here in the **servant girl . . .**

**Rhoda** who answered Peter’s knock and **recognized his voice**. Though the saints were praying earnestly (v. 5) for Peter’s release, they did not expect an answer so soon! When

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<sup>28</sup>McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:564). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

v. verse

Rhoda insisted, **Peter is at the door!** they replied, **You're out of your mind. It must be his angel.** This statement implies a belief in personal angels, that is, angels who are assigned to individuals (cf. Dan. 10:21; Matt. 18:10). It also suggests a belief that an angel may look like the person with whom he is identified!

When they **saw Peter, they were astonished** (exestēsan; cf. 9:21). Peter's mention of **James** indicates that James had a place of prominence in the Jerusalem church. Quite clearly this James was the Lord's half brother.

After making himself known to the brothers, Peter **left for another place.** Where this was is not known. It is possible, because of 1 Peter 1:1, to say he went to Asia Minor. Later Peter was at Antioch of Syria (Gal. 2:11). Paul referred to Peter's itinerant ministry (1 Cor. 1:12; 9:5).<sup>29</sup>

**Spurgeon:** If God wishes to surprise his people he has only to answer their prayers, such is their unbelief.

**JNTC: "You're out of your mind!" they said to her.** God is real, and he answers prayer. Many of us can grasp this concept intellectually, but when the evidence is knocking at the door we find it hard to believe.

**It is his guardian angel.** The concept of guardian or ministering angels is also found at Mt 18:10, but it is not exclusively a New Testament idea. "For he will give his angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways" (Psalm 91:11). And from the Talmud (Soncino Edition):

"On entering a bathroom one should say: 'Be honored, you honored and holy ones who minister to the Most High .... Wait for me until I enter, take care of my needs and return to you.' " (B'rakhot 60b)

A note in the Soncino English edition explains that these words are addressed to the angels thought of as accompanying a man to the privy, which was regarded as the haunt of evil spirits. Also from the Talmud:

" ' ... I, Daniel, alone saw the vision, for the men with me did not see the vision; instead a great quaking fell upon them ....' (Daniel 10:7) .... Since they did not see it, why were they terrified? Because, although they themselves saw nothing, their guardian angel did see it. Rabina said, 'This proves that when a person is terrified and doesn't know why, it is because his guardian angel has seen something, even though he hasn't.' " (Sanhedrin 94a)

In the Soncino edition one note explains that according to the Talmud (Chagigah 16a), everyone has a guardian angel accompanying him. Another note speculates that there might be a connection between this "guardian spirit" and the modern idea of the "subconscious mind."<sup>30</sup>

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cf. *confer*, compare

<sup>29</sup>Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-c1985). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (2:385). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

<sup>30</sup>Stern, D. H. (1996, c1992). *Jewish New Testament Commentary : A companion volume to the Jewish New Testament* (electronic ed.) (Ac 12:15). Clarksville: Jewish New Testament Publications.

### **Acts 12:16**

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

**[But Peter continued knocking: and when they had opened the door]** It was always customary to know the identity of a person before admitting him. If it was a friend, the doorkeeper announced it to the master of the house, getting permission to open the door. In this case the doors were doubly guarded for fear of the Jews (John 20:19).

**[astonished]** Greek: *existemi* (GSN-1839) (Acts 2:7; Acts 8:13; Acts 9:21; Acts 10:45).

### **Acts 12:17**

**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 show these things unto James, and to the brethren. And he departed, and went into another place.**

James - different one, this is the Lord's brother.

Peter departs and went to another place. All history of Peter here terminates in Acts. This James was Jesus' brother, who became a leader in the Jerusalem church (Acts 15:13; Galatians 1:19). The James who was killed (Acts 12:2) was John's brother and one of the original 12 disciples.

**[beckoning unto them with the hand to hold their peace]** The action indicates that he was in a hurry and must not be interrupted. He wanted to leave the news of his deliverance before departing from Herod's tyranny. He went back to some unknown destination.

**[Lord had brought him out of the prison]** The Lord did this, not some friendly jailer, as taught by infidels.

**[James]** James the Lord's brother (Acts 12:17; Acts 15:13-21; Acts 21:18; Galatians 1:19; Galatians 2:9,12; James 1:1; 1 Cor. 15:7 (Luke 8:19)). There is still no supremacy of Peter over the church. The nearest Peter ever got to it was to be one of three pillars of the church (Galatians 2:9).

“James” (literally “Jacob,” as with every use of “James” in the New Testament) was a common name; this is not the James of 12:2, but the James of 15:13, 1 Cor. 15:7 and Galatians 2:9. Jewish sources tell us that this James, Jesus' younger brother, was highly reputed for his devoutness in Judaism (cf. Acts 21:18-20), and when he was later martyred the people of Jerusalem protested his death. *He* would thus be safe from Agrippa, who catered to the Jewish masses (Acts 12:1-3).

**Clarke: Show these things unto James, and to the brethren**—That is, in one word, show them to the Church, at the head of which James undoubtedly was; as we may clearly understand by the part he took in the famous council held at Jerusalem, relative to certain differences between the believing Jews and Gentiles. See Acts 15:13-21. There is still no supremacy for Peter. He who was bishop or overseer of the Church at Jerusalem was certainly at the head of the whole Church of God at this time; but James was then bishop or inspector of the Church at Jerusalem, and, consequently, was the only visible head then upon earth.

**Clarke: He departed—into another place**—Some popish writers say that he went to Rome, and founded a Christian Church there. Those who can believe any thing may believe this. Where he went we know not; but it is probable that he withdrew for the present into a place of privacy, till the heat of the inquiry was over relative to his escape from the prison; for he saw that Herod was intent on his death.

**Clarke: Declared—how the Lord had brought him out of the prison**—He still persisted in the belief that his deliverance was purely supernatural. It seems that some modern critics could have informed him of his mistake. See also Acts 12:11.

**McGee:** They just couldn't believe their eyes. They just couldn't believe that their prayers had been answered.

Now Peter got out of town. Since God had miraculously delivered him, couldn't God have miraculously kept him safe in Jerusalem? Shouldn't Peter have said, "I'm just going to stick around. God has delivered me out of prison and I know He can keep me"? Of course, God could keep him. But God expects us to use our common sense. Sometimes what looks like a tremendous faith in God is actually tempting God. Even after God has done some wonderful or miraculous thing for you and for me, He still expects us to use our common sense.<sup>31</sup>

**ESV: James** here is the brother of Jesus (see Introduction to James: Author and Title; Gal. 1:19), not James the brother of John (who was killed by Herod, Acts 12:2). From this point forward in Acts, James seems to have the most prominent leadership role among the apostles in Jerusalem (see 15:13–21; 21:18). Though James was not one of the original Twelve, he apparently became an apostle as well (cf. 1 Cor. 15:7; Gal. 1:19; 2:9). The book of James also seems to be written on his own (apostolic) authority, not as a spokesman for someone else (see James 1:1). For some reason Peter no longer remained the leader and spokesman for the apostles in Jerusalem but **went to another place**. Luke does not specify where Peter went (some have suggested either Rome or Antioch); he was back in Jerusalem later for a conference (Acts 15:7–21).

As a postscript to this part of the story, Luke says that the next morning there is a great stir among the soldiers about Peter's whereabouts (12:18). Recriminations probably fly fast and furious about who is responsible for letting him escape. The soldiers' lives are on the line. Herod has a thorough search made for the missing prisoner. When he cannot be

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<sup>31</sup>McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:564). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.



found, Herod tortures the guards to see if they have any information and then has them executed (18:19).

The later Code of Justinian shows that a guard who allows a prisoner to escape is subject to the same penalty the escaped prisoner would have suffered. This explains why the jailor at Philippi is about to kill himself when he thinks the prisoners have escaped (16:27). It's the reason the soldiers want to kill the prisoners, including Paul, who are on the shipwrecked boat. They don't want the prisoners to escape, because if the prisoners escape, the guards will have to suffer their penalty (27:42).

### **Acts 12:18**

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

[**stir**] Greek: tarachos (GSN-5017), stir. Here and in Acts 19:23. It was a matter of life and death with these soldiers (Acts 12:19).

**McGee:** Notice that Dr. Luke uses the diminutive—"no small stir." When he says there was no small stir, believe me, he means there was a mighty big stir. Also in chapter 15 of Acts, when Judaism came into the church, Dr. Luke says they had "no small dissension." He means they had a regular knock-down-drag-out. They had a real fight, a regular donnybrook. But Dr. Luke always uses that very gracious and gentle diminutive—"no small stir" and "no small dissension."

When the soldiers found what had happened and realized that Simon Peter was gone, I think they called out half the army. They must have made a house-to-house search. Maybe they threw a guard around the city to prevent his escape. There was no small stir according to Dr. Luke. I'll say not! There was a mighty big stir.

### **Acts 12:19**

**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.**

Impotent vengeance! Certificate of Debt digression here: *tetelestai!*

[**And he went down from Judaea to Caesarea**] Herod went to Caesarea, not Peter.

**Clarke: Commanded that they should be put to death**—He believed, or pretended to believe, that the escape of Peter was owing to the negligence of the keepers: jailers, watchmen, etc., ordinarily suffered the same kind of punishment which should have been inflicted on the prisoner whose escape they were supposed to have favored.

**Clarke: He went down from Judea to Caesarea**—How soon he went down, and how long he stayed there, we know not.

**Barnes: He examined the keepers.** The soldiers who were entrusted with his custody. Probably only those who had the special care of him at that watch of the night. The word examine here means to inquire diligently, to make investigation. He subjected them to a rigid scrutiny to ascertain the manner of his escape; for it is evident that Herod did not mean to admit the possibility of a miraculous interposition.

**Barnes: Should be put to death.** For having failed to keep Peter. This punishment they had a right to expect for having suffered his escape.

**BBC:** Given the soldiers' precautions (chains, doors and different guards posted for each—Acts 12:6), it was humanly impossible for Peter to have escaped without all the guards having aided him. Agrippa examines them for information, perhaps under torture, but they have none. Under Roman law, a guard whose prisoner escaped would pay for it with the penalty due the prisoner—in this case, his own life (cf. Acts 16:27; Acts 27:42), a custom Agrippa, deprived of a favor for the masses, chooses to follow.

Herod is cold-blooded and he is hardhearted. He has no regard for human life. By executing the guards, he is saying to the world that he does not believe Peter's escape was an act of God. He is holding his men responsible. He executes all the soldiers who were guarding Peter. Then he goes down to Caesarea, which is a resort area on the Mediterranean. Pilate enjoyed it down there, and many of the Roman rulers stayed down there. Actually, it was the Roman headquarters. Romans, like Pilate, didn't care for Jerusalem. They certainly didn't love Jerusalem as King David had. So now Herod beats it down to Caesarea to have a little vacation.

**ESV:** In executing the **sentries** (i.e., guards), Herod was following Roman practice, which specified that soldiers who lost their prisoners were subject to the same penalty as that due to the prisoners. Since the soldiers knew that their lives were at stake, they certainly would not have all fallen asleep apart from the miraculous intervention of the angel who rescued Peter. Caesarea was the seat of the Roman government and had a mixed Jewish and Gentile population (see note on 8:40).

### **Acts 12:20**

**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.**

**[highly displeased]** Greek: *thumomacheo* (GSN-2371), fighting mad. For what reason no historian seems to know.

**[Blastus the king's chamberlain]** They evidently bribed Blastus who had great influence over Herod and had charge of his bedchamber. Herod became pacified through Blastus.

**[their country was nourished by the king's country]** Tyre and Sidon were equal subjects of the Romans with the inhabitants of Galilee, so Herod could not go to war with them. He could, however, cut off supplies from Galilee and other countries under him. Tyre and Sidon were trading centers and could not exist without provisions from surrounding countries, so they made peace with Herod.

**Clarke: Desired peace**—The Tyrians and Sidonians being equally subjects of the Roman government with the inhabitants of Galilee, Herod could not go to war with them; but, being irritated against them, he might prevent their supplies: they therefore endeavored to be on peaceable, i.e. friendly, terms with him.

**Clarke: Their country was nourished by the king's country**—That is, they had all their supplies from Galilee; for Tyre and Sidon, being places of trade and commerce, with little territory, were obliged to have all their provisions from the countries under Herod's jurisdiction. This had been the case even from the days of Solomon, as we learn from 1 Kings 5:11; where it is said that Solomon gave Hiram twenty thousand measures of wheat, for food to his household; and twenty measures of pure oil: thus gave Solomon to Hiram year by year. See also Ezekiel 27:17.

The Hellenistic (culturally Greek) cities of Tyre and Sidon were dependent on Agrippa's territories for vital food supplies; he had been withholding trade from them.

These coastal cities, Tyre and Sidon, were free and self-governing but economically dependent on Judea (see the map in the introduction to Acts for their location). We don't know why Herod had quarreled with them, but now representatives from those cities were trying to appease him through his personal servant.

**Tyre and Sidon** were in Herod's dominion and for some reason had incurred his wrath. Because these cities depended on Galilee for grain, they desired to make peace with Herod Agrippa. Probably they bribed Blastus, a trusted personal servant of the king, to work out a reconciliation. On the appointed day when Herod was delivering a speech, the people honored him as a god, and the Lord God judged him with death. This was in A.D. 44. This account parallels that given by Josephus in his *Antiquities of the Jews* (19. 8. 2). After Herod's death, Felix and Festus, successively, were the governors of Judea.

Three of Herod's children figure prominently in the later narrative of Acts—Drusilla, the wife of Felix (24:24-26); Bernice (25:13, 23), and Herod Agrippa II (25:13-26:32).<sup>32</sup>

**ESV: 20–25** The Death of Herod Agrippa I. Chapter 12 begins and ends with **Herod Agrippa I**: the persecutor of the church now brings about his own death (see note on 11:24 and the parallel account of Herod Agrippa's death in Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 19.343–350).

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<sup>32</sup>Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-c1985). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (2:385). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

A **chamberlain** is a trusted personal assistant to a high government official; the Greek literally means “the one over the bedroom,” but such a person would have had wider responsibilities than this.

### **Acts 12:21**

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

**[made an oration unto them]** Made a political speech which was hailed by the people who exalted Herod. He took glory that belonged to God.

**BBC:** Agrippa I liked to flaunt his power; his self-display had unfortunately led to anti-Jewish riots in Alexandria earlier. His public meeting with these emissaries is in the theater of Caesarea, built by his grandfather Herod the Great; the foundations of this theater still remain today. According to Josephus this speech occurred on a festival day in honor of the emperor (probably his birthday, but perhaps a rare festival held in March A.D. 44).

**McGee:** Herod was pompous and lifted up by pride. He was also a pleasing speaker. He was the kind of politician who would have been elected no matter what party he would run for.

Herod is one of the men who is a miniature of Antichrist. John tells us this in 1 John 2:18: “Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.” The people hail him as a deity.

### **Acts 12:22**

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

**[It is the voice of a god, and not of a man]** Herod did not rebuke the people for this, so was smitten by an angel. Josephus says, "He fell into the deepest sorrow; a severe pain also arose in his bowels, and he died after five days of illness" (Josephus, Antiquities, Book 19:8:2). Thus Peter's dreaded enemy was dead, so he could go about again in Herod's territory without fear (Acts 12:1-17).

**BBC:** The first-century Jewish historian Josephus reports that on this occasion Agrippa flaunted his power, and his flatterers praised him as a god—the sort of flattery toward royal patrons common for centuries in the Greek East. But in the Roman period Caesar expected even pagans who were not emperors (such as the general Germanicus in Egypt) to humbly deflect such praise. Because Agrippa does not repudiate their praise, he collapses immediately. Josephus reports that he was carried to the palace, where he died at the age of fifty-four, after five days of stomach pains caused by worms. Deaths from bowel diseases and worms were thought among the most horrible.

## **Acts 12:23**

**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.**

Herod's grandfather, Herod the Great, died of the same horrible disease.

Josephus: "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 5 days torture, he expired in his 54th year."

**[worms]** Greek: *skolekobrotos* (GSN-4662), only here. The noun *skolex* (GSN-4663), worm, is used in Mark 9:44-48.

**[gave up the ghost]** Greek: *ekpsucho* (GSN-1634), only here; Acts 5:5,10. That is, he died of the disorder by which he was then seized, after having lingered, in excruciating torments, for five days, as Josephus has stated.

**Clarke: The angel of the Lord smote him**—His death was most evidently a judgment from God.

**Clarke: Because he gave not God the glory**—He did not rebuke his flatterers, but permitted them to give him that honor that was due to God alone. See Acts 12:21.

**Clarke: And was eaten of worms**—Whether this was the *morbus pedicularis*, or whether a violent inflammation of his bowels, terminating in putrefaction, did not actually produce worms, which, for several days, swarmed in his infected entrails, we cannot tell. It is most likely that this latter was the case; and this is at once more agreeable to the letter of the text, and to the circumstances of the case as related by Josephus.

**LAN:** Herod died a horrible death accompanied by intense pain; he was literally eaten alive, from the inside out, by worms. To be eaten by worms was considered to be one of the most disgraceful ways to die. Pride is a serious sin, and in this case, God chose to punish it immediately. God does not immediately punish all sin, but he *will* bring all to judgment (Hebrews 9:27). Accept Christ's offer of forgiveness today. No one can afford to wait.

**McGee:** Friend, God will not share His glory with anyone. “I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images” (Isa. 42:8). Herod refused to glorify God through the miracle of Peter’s escape from prison. And now he is willing to let the people deify *him* God judges him. God is jealous of His glory. What a lesson we have here!

Now one would think that with all this persecution taking place the poor church would be destroyed and disappear.

**JNTC:** The description here of Herod Agrippa’s death is consistent, though not identical, with that of Josephus:

“Agrippa came to Caesarea, where there was a festival for him. On the second day he put on a garment made entirely of silver and came into the theater early in the morning, at which time the silver of his garment reflecting the sun’s rays shone so resplendently as to spread a horror on those gazing at him. Presently his flatterers exclaimed that he was a god, adding, ‘Be merciful to us; for although till now we have revered you only as a man, henceforth we will regard you as superior to mortal nature.’ But the king neither rebuked them nor rejected their impious flattery. However, as he looked up, he saw an owl and immediately understood that this bird was the messenger of ill tidings. Suddenly and violently a severe pain arose in his stomach. Therefore he looked at his friends and said, ‘I, whom you call a god, am commanded now to leave this life; while Providence thus reproves the lying words you just now said to me.’ After five days, exhausted by the stomach pain, he died, aged fifty-three.” (Adapted from *Antiquities of the Jews* 19:8:2)

The report is similar enough to confirm the reliability of the New Testament, yet different enough to show that the descriptions are independent of each other.<sup>33</sup>

## **Acts 12:24**

**But the word of God grew and multiplied.**

**Clark: But the word of God**—The Christian doctrine preached by the apostles grew and multiplied—became more evident, and had daily accessions; for the spirit of revelation rested on those men, and God was daily adding to that word as circumstances required, in order to complete that testimony of his which we now find contained in the New Testament. As there is in the original an allusion to the vegetation of grain, (ηυξανε, it grew, as corn grows, the stalk and the ear; και επληθυνετο, it was multiplied, as the corn is in the full ear), there is probably a reference to the parable of the SOWER and his seed; for the seed is the word of God, and the doctrine of the kingdom. It was liberally sown; it grew vigorously, and became greatly multiplied. And why? Because it was the word, the doctrine of God—there was no corruption in it; and because God watered it with the dew of heaven from on high.

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<sup>33</sup>Stern, D. H. (1996, c1992). *Jewish New Testament Commentary : A companion volume to the Jewish New Testament* (electronic ed.) (Ac 12:22). Clarksville: Jewish New Testament Publications.

**the word of God increased.** No power can triumph over the word of God (cf. 6:7; 13:49), and those who attempt to harm God's people will in the end face judgment themselves.

### **Word increases and spreads (12:24)**

Luke juxtaposes the story of the death of Herod with good news about the church. Herod dies, "but the word of God continued to increase and spread" (12:24). Earlier we saw that Luke comments briefly on the progress of the church at regular intervals (6:7; 9:31). Here he does so once again.

This summary is illustrative of the pattern of reversals in Luke's account. The story begins with the future of the Jerusalem church being in grave doubt, with one of its leaders killed and its chief spokesperson awaiting trial and execution. But the tale ends with Peter's escape, the death of the despot, and the church growing and spreading. There is also another fundamental change in the book of Acts. Up to now, Luke's story could be called "The Acts of Peter." But Peter is about to pass out of Luke's narrative, except for a brief appearance in chapter 15. From now on, Luke's account will be about "The Acts of Paul."<sup>34</sup>

### **Acts 12:25**

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

Barnabas, Saul, and Mark (nephew to Barnabas) are on their way to Antioch... 300 miles before them; Jerusalem is behind them, in more ways than one...

**ESV: their service.** That is, their famine relief journey to Jerusalem (see 11:29–30). Having completed that mission, Paul and Barnabas returned to Antioch with Mark accompanying them (see 12:12).

End of the First half of Acts (Peter's half)!

Similarities:	Peter	Paul
First Sermon	2	13
Lame man healed	3	14
The Sorcerer	Simon, 8	Elymas, 13
Influence	shadow, 5	handkerchief, 19
Laying on hands	8	19
Worshiped	10	14
Raised	Tabitha, 10	Eutychus, 20
Imprisoned	12	28

Chapters 1-12: Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria.

Chapters 13-28: Uttermost part of the earth.

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<sup>34</sup> <http://www.wcg.org/lit/bible/acts/acts12.htm>

After they had taken relief to the saints in Judea (Acts 11:27-30) they returned with John Mark (Acts 12:12).

**McGee:** John Mark goes back to Antioch with Barnabas and Saul. Remember that they had been down in Jerusalem with the gift to the church there.

We have come now to the end of the second period of the Book of Acts. The gospel has gone into Judea and Samaria. Beginning with the next chapter we will see the movement of the gospel to the uttermost part of the earth. We are still in that movement today. I hope that you and I are both involved in it.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup>McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:565). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.



## The Ministries of Peter and Paul Compared and Contrasted

	Peter	Paul
Formerly known as:	Simon	Saul
First encounter with Christ	Introduced by Andrew at Bethany (John 1:41)	A supernatural vision on the road to Damascus (9:1-6)
Occupation	Fisherman (Luke 5:1-11)	Tentmaker (18:3)
Formal religious training	A disciple of Christ (4:13; Mark 1:16, 17)	A disciple of Gamaliel (22:3); a Pharisee (23:5, 6; Phil. 3:5)
Role	Missionary to the Jews	Missionary to the Gentiles
Strength	Bold preacher and spokesman; leader of the early church	Intelligent defender of the faith and tireless church planter
Ministry experiences	Usually paired with John	Paired with Barnabas (13:1-15:39), then Silas (15:40-17:14), then a number of others
	Preached the great sermon at Pentecost when three thousand believed	Preached everywhere he went, including the famous address on Mars' Hill (17:16-33)
	Healed others (3:1-10; 5:15)	Healed others (14:8-10; 19:12)
	Raised Dorcas from the dead (9:36-42)	Raised Eutychus from the dead (20:7-12)
	Jailed frequently (4:3; 5:18; 12:3)	Jailed frequently (16:23-24; 21:27-36)
	Gave impassioned sermons to religious authorities (4:5-12; 5:29-32)	Spoke boldly to religious rulers and leaders (22:30-23:6; 26:1-29)
	Experienced a vision in which he was commanded to take the gospel to Cornelius (10)	Experienced a vision in which he was commanded to take the gospel to Europe (16:6-10)
Writings	1 and 2 Peter	Romans; 1 and 2 Corinthians; Galatians; Ephesians; Philippians; Colossians; 1 and 2 Thessalonians; 1 and 2 Timothy; Titus; Philemon
Death	Church tradition says he was crucified upside down.	Church tradition says he was beheaded.