

The Acts of the Apostles

Lesson 12: Peter's Great Escape

Acts 12:1-25



In Acts 12, the story returns to Jerusalem where the 12 apostles were laboring for the LORD.

Acts 12:1

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

Up to now, it had been the religious leaders – the Sadducees and Pharisees – who tried to stop the apostles' work. Now trouble came from the political world, from the king of Judea himself, **Herod Agrippa**, also known as Herod or Agrippa I.



Acts 12:1

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



Herod Agrippa (11 BC – AD 44) was the grandson of Herod the Great, the king who built the second temple and ordered the murder of Jewish children around the time that Jesus was born.



Acts 12:2

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



Acts 12:2

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

James and John were two of the Lord's first disciples.



Matthew 4:18-22

- ¹⁸ And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers.
- ¹⁹ And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.
- ²⁰ And they straightway left *their* nets, and followed him.
- ²¹ And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, **James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother,** in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them.
- ²² And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him.



Jacobus de Sone Zebedæi, met den sweerde gedood, door Herodes Agrippa, binnen Jerufalem. Anno Chrifli 45.



James was the first of the twelve apostles to die a martyr's death.

James and Judas Iscariot are the only men of the original 12 whose deaths are recorded in the Bible.

Acts 12:3-4

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



Acts 12:3-4

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



This is the only place in the King James version of the Bible where the Greek word for the Passover [πάσχα pascha] was translated **Easter**.

Acts 12:3-4

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



A quaternion is a squad of four.
Four quaternions of soldiers are 16 men.

Acts 12:3-4

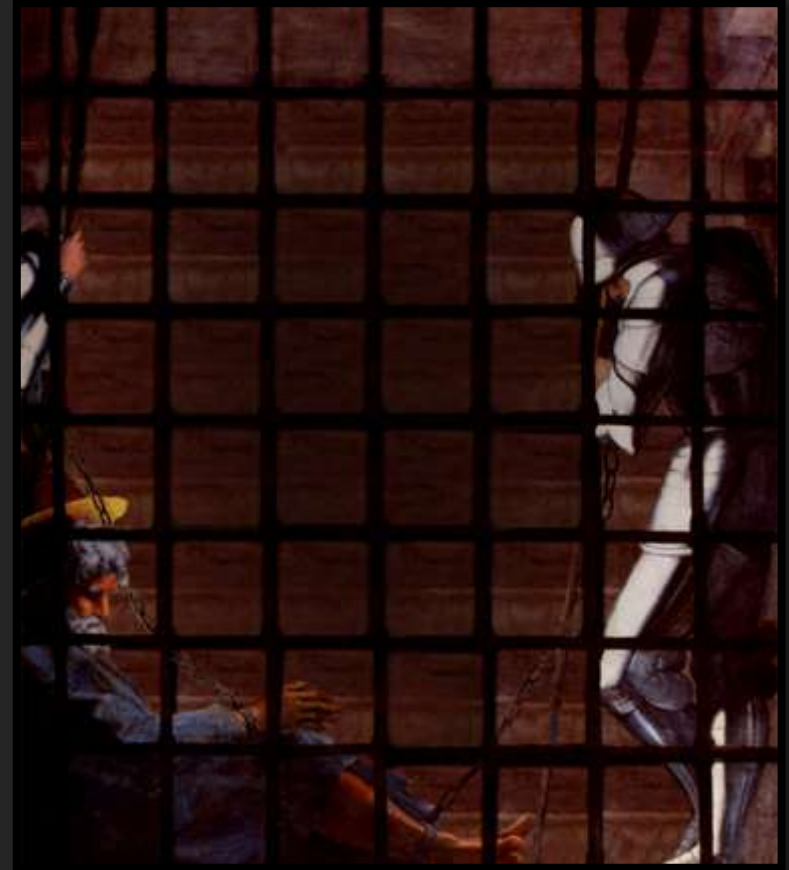
- 3 And because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also. (Then were the days of unleavened bread.)
- 4 And when he had apprehended him, he put *him* in prison, and delivered *him* to **four quaternions** of soldiers to keep him intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people.

“... he was guarded by four men at a time, namely, two in the prison with him, and two before the doors, and that they were relieved every three hours by four others; making in all sixteen men.”



Acts 12:5-6

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



Acts 12:7

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.



Acts 12:7

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.



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.



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.



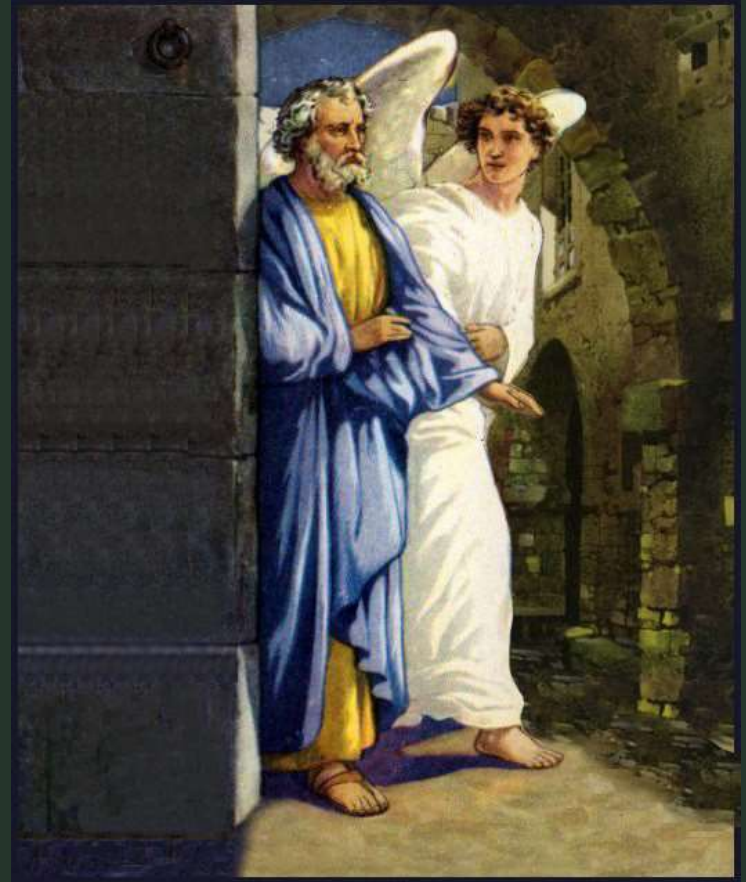
Acts 12:10

¹⁰ When they were past the first and the second ward, they came unto the iron gate that leadeth unto the city;



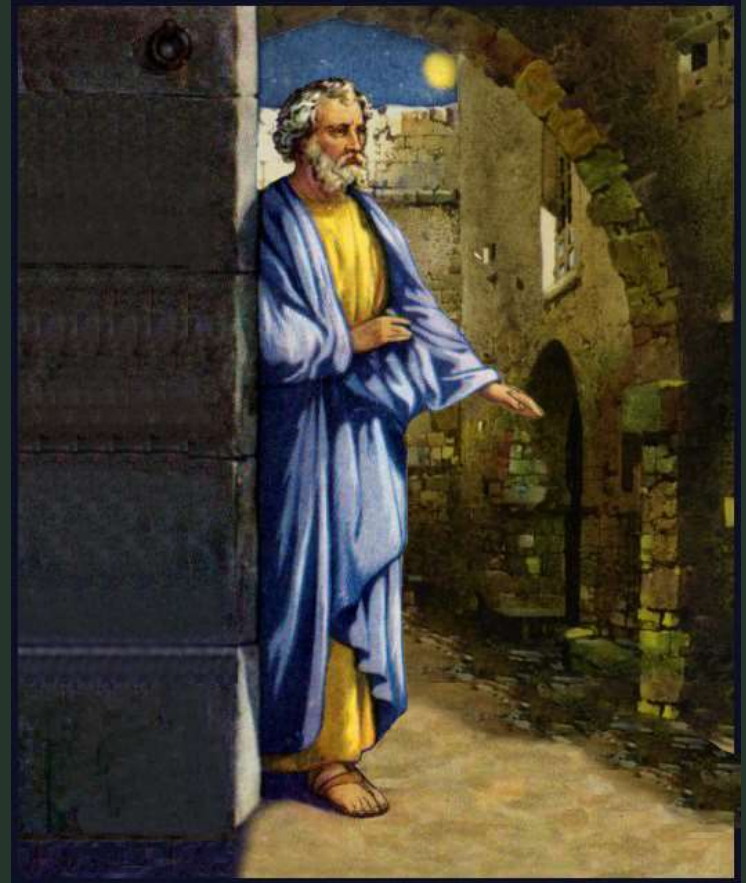
Acts 12:10

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;



Acts 12:10

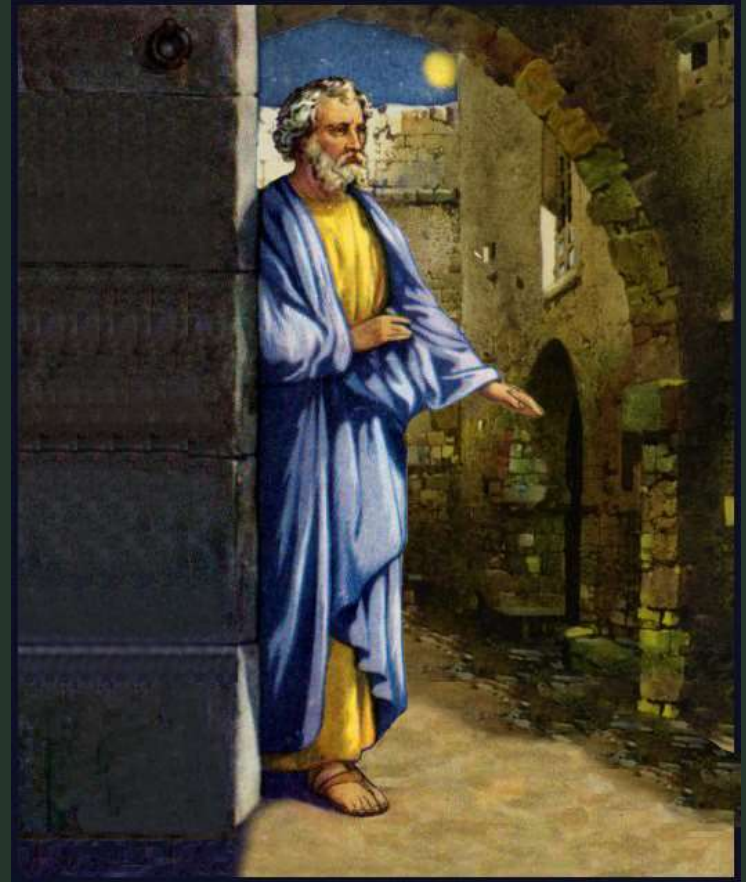
¹⁰ When they were past the first and the second ward, they came unto the iron gate that leadeth unto the city; which opened to them of his own accord: and they went out and passed on through one street; and forthwith the angel departed from him.



Acts 12:11

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.*



Acts 12:12

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.



Acts 12:12

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.



John Mark appears again in this chapter when he joins Paul on his first mission. He is the man who wrote the Gospel of Mark.

Acts 12:13

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





Acts 12:14-16

- 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.
- 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.



Acts 12:14-16

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

Acts 12:17

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

And he departed, and went into another place.



Acts 12:17

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

And he departed,
and went into another place.



Peter was talking about a *different* James – “James the Lord’s brother” (Gal. 1:19), one of the pillars of the early church (Gal. 2:9), and the author of *The Epistle of James*.

Acts 12:18-19

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



Acts 12:20

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;

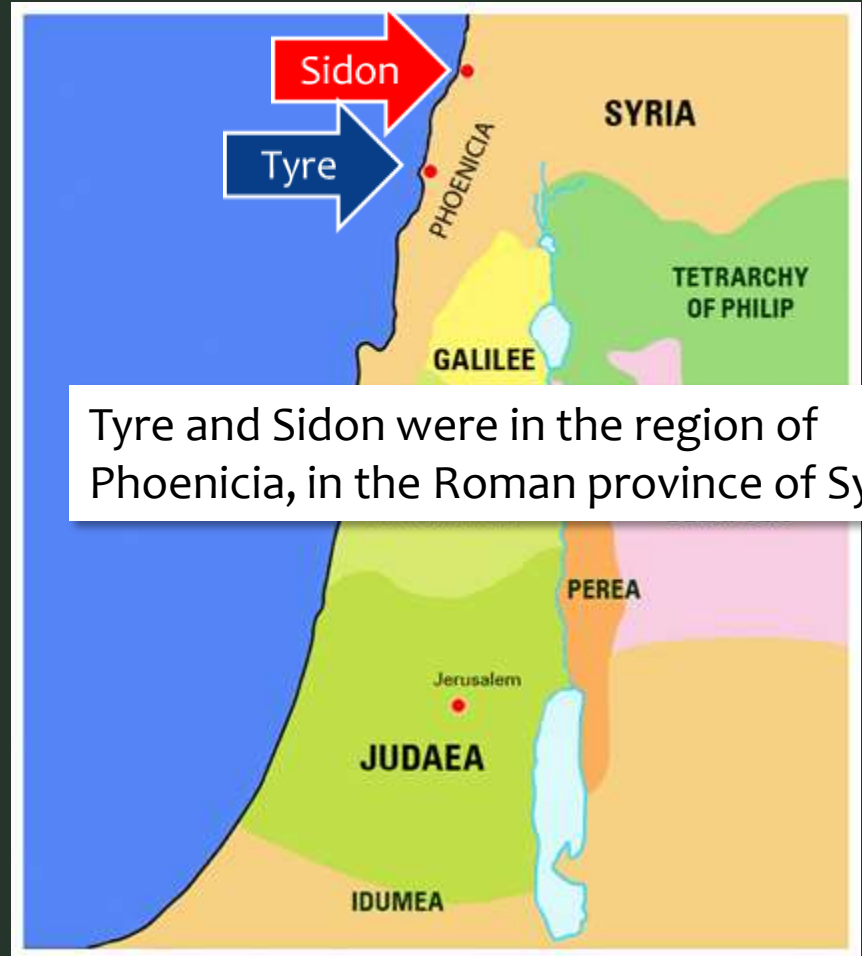
because their country was nourished by the king's country.



Acts 12:20

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.



Acts 12 continues with the sudden death of King Herod Agrippa.



Acts 12:21-23

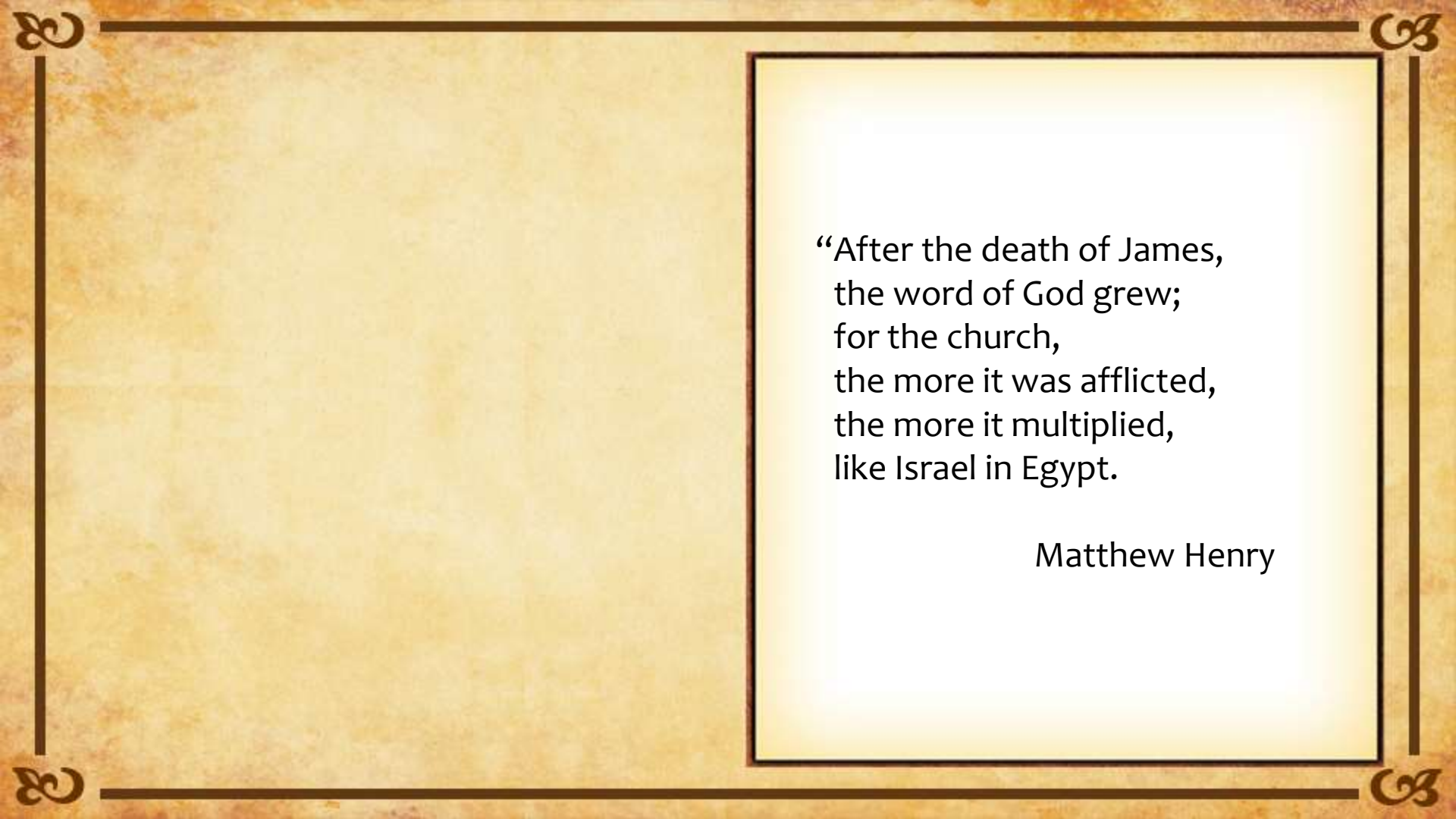
- ²¹ And upon a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne, and made an oration unto them.
- ²² And the people gave a shout, saying, *It is the voice of a god, and not of a man.*
- ²³ And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory:
and he was eaten of worms,
and gave up the ghost.



Acts 12:24

But the word of God grew and multiplied.





“After the death of James,
the word of God grew;
for the church,
the more it was afflicted,
the more it multiplied,
like Israel in Egypt.

Matthew Henry

As PART TWO of Acts comes to an end, the focus returns to Paul and Barnabas who were back in Antioch after bringing help to the believers in Jerusalem.

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.



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.

John Mark was nephew to Barnabas.



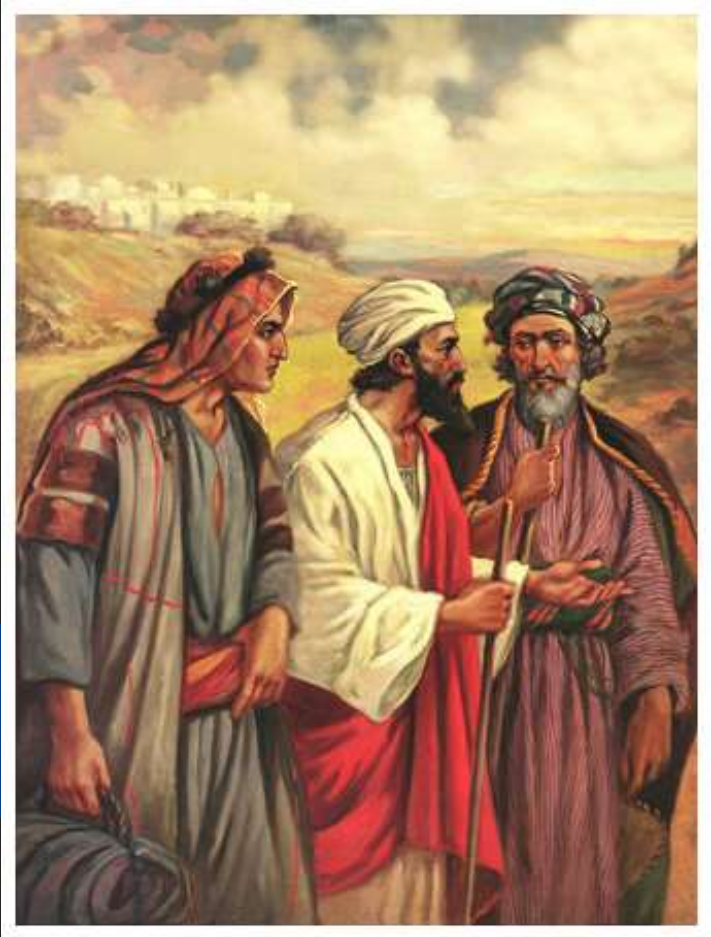
Acts 12:25

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

John Mark was nephew to Barnabas.

Colossians 4:10

Aristarchus my fellowprisoner saluteth you, and Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas ...



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.

END OF CHAPTER 12



Where we are at in this study:

- ✓ Part 1: The witness in Jerusalem
Chapters 1 to 7
- ✓ Part 2: The witness in Judaea and Samaria
Chapters 8 to 12

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Up Next –

Part 3: The witness unto the uttermost parts of the earth begins with Paul's first mission.

Questions to test your understanding of this lesson:

1. Most of Acts 12 takes place in what city?
2. How did James the brother of John die?
3. According to Acts 12:3, why did King Herod put Peter in prison?
4. According to Acts 12:6, what was Peter doing when the angel came?
5. According to Acts 12:9, what did Peter think he was seeing?
6. After the angel left him, where did Peter go?
7. Who heard Peter knocking at the door of the gate?
8. According to Acts 12:23, why did the Lord smite Herod?
9. How does Acts 12:24 describe the revival that was happening everywhere?
10. What was John Mark's relationship to Barnabas?

Each question is worth 10 points. Do NOT share your answers with other students.



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