



Lesson 14 – Delivered From Prison

Based on Acts 12:1-23

1) Where does our lesson begin today?

12:1 Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth his hands to _____ certain of the church.

The government of Judea was then in the hands of Herod Agrippa, subject to Claudius, the Roman emperor. Herod also held the position of tetrarch of Galilee. He was professedly a proselyte to the Jewish faith, and apparently very zealous in carrying out the ceremonies of the Jewish law. Desirous of obtaining the favor of the Jews, hoping thus to make secure his offices and honors, he proceeded to carry out their desires by persecuting the church of Christ, spoiling the houses and goods of the believers, and imprisoning the leading members of the church.

2) What did he do?

Acts 12:2-3 And he _____ James the brother of John with the sword. And because he saw it _____ the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also. (Then were the days of unleavened bread.)

He cast James, the brother of John, into prison, and sent an executioner to kill him with the sword, as another Herod had caused the prophet John to be beheaded. Seeing that the Jews were well pleased with these efforts, he imprisoned Peter also.

It was during the Passover that these cruelties were practiced. While the Jews were celebrating their deliverance from Egypt and pretending great zeal for the law of God, they were at the same time transgressing every principle of that law by persecuting and murdering the believers in Christ.

3) What was God's Church doing at this time?

Acts 12:5 Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made _____ of the church unto God for him.

Herod's act in putting James to death was applauded by the Jews, though some complained of the private manner in which it was accomplished, maintaining that a public execution would have more thoroughly intimidated the believers and those sympathizing with them. Herod therefore held Peter in custody, meaning still further to gratify the Jews by the public spectacle of his death. But it was suggested that it would not be safe to bring the veteran apostle out for execution before all the people then assembled in Jerusalem. It was feared that the sight of him being led out to die might excite the pity of the multitude.

4) When did they intend to have his "trial"?

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 _____ to bring him forth to the people.

While, upon various pretexts, the execution of Peter was being delayed until after the Passover, the members of the church had time for deep searching of heart and earnest prayer. They prayed without ceasing for Peter, for they felt that he could not be spared from the cause. They realized that they had reached a place where, without the special help of God, the church of Christ would be destroyed.

5) What had Jesus said previously about the Temple?

Matthew 23:38 Behold, your house is left unto you _____.

Worshippers from every nation sought the temple which had been dedicated to the worship of God. Glittering with gold and precious stones, it was a vision of beauty and grandeur. But Jehovah was no longer to be found in that palace of loveliness. Israel as a nation had divorced herself from God.



The day of Peter's execution was at last appointed, but still the prayers of the believers ascended to heaven; and while all their energies and sympathies were called out in fervent appeals for help, angels of God were watching over the imprisoned apostle.

6) How many soldiers had watch over Peter?

Acts 12:4 And when he had apprehended him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four _____ of soldiers to keep him; intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people.

Remembering the former escape of the apostles from prison, Herod on this occasion had taken double precautions. To prevent all possibility of release, Peter had been put under the charge of sixteen soldiers, who, in different watches, guarded him day and night.

7) How was he imprisoned?

Acts 12:6 And when Herod would have brought him forth, the same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two _____; and the _____ before the door kept the prison.

In his cell he was placed between two soldiers and was bound by two chains, each chain being fastened to the wrist of one of the soldiers. He was unable to move without their knowledge. With the prison doors securely fastened, and a strong guard before them, all chance of rescue or escape through human means was cut off. ***But man's extremity is God's opportunity.***

8) What did God do for Peter?

Acts 12:7 And, behold, the angel of the Lord came upon him, and a _____ in the prison: and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, Arise up quickly. And his chains _____ off from his hands.

Peter was confined in a rock-hewn cell, the doors of which were strongly bolted and barred; and the soldiers on guard were made answerable for the safekeeping of the prisoner. But the bolts and bars and the Roman guard, which effectually cut off all possibility of human aid, were but to make more complete the triumph of God in the deliverance of Peter. Herod was lifting his hand against Omnipotence, and he was to be utterly defeated.

9) What did the angel tell Peter?

Acts 12:8 And the angel said unto him, _____ thyself, and bind on thy sandals. And so he did. And he saith unto him, Cast thy garment about thee, and follow me.

10) Did Peter grasp what was happening?

Acts 12:9 And he went out, and followed him; and wist not that it was _____ which was done by the angel; but thought he saw a vision.

Peter mechanically obeys, keeping his wondering gaze riveted upon his visitor and believing himself to be dreaming or in a vision. The angel moves toward the door, followed by the usually talkative Peter, now dumb from amazement. They step over the guard and reach the heavily bolted door, which of its own accord swings open and closes again immediately, while the guards within and without are motionless at their post.

11) Where did the angel take him?

Acts 12:10 When they were past the first and the second ward, they came unto the iron gate that leadeth unto the _____; which opened to them of his own accord: and they went out, and _____ on through one street; and forthwith the angel departed from him.

The second door, also guarded within and without, is reached. It opens as did the first, with no creaking of hinges or rattling of iron bolts. They pass through, and it closes again as noiselessly. In the same way they pass through the third gateway and find themselves in the open street.



No word is spoken; there is no sound of footsteps. The angel glides on in front, encircled by a light of dazzling brightness, and Peter, bewildered, and still believing himself to be in a dream, follows his deliverer. Thus, they pass on through one street, and then, the mission of the angel being accomplished, he suddenly disappears.

12) What did Peter realize?

Acts 12:11 And when Peter was come to himself, he said, Now I know of a _____, 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.

He remembered falling asleep, bound between two soldiers, with his sandals and outer garments removed. He examined his person and found himself fully dressed and girded. His wrists, swollen from wearing the cruel irons, were free from the manacles. He realized that his freedom was no delusion, no dream or vision, but a blessed reality. On the morrow he was to have been led forth to die; but, lo, an angel had delivered him from prison and from death.

13) Where did he go from there?

Acts 12:12-13 And when he had considered the thing, he came to the house of Mary the mother of _____, whose surname was _____; where many were gathered together praying. And as Peter knocked at the door of the gate, a damsel came to hearken, named Rhoda.

The apostle made his way at once to the house where his brethren were assembled and where they were at that moment engaged in earnest prayer for him.

14) Did Rhoda let him in?

Acts 12:14-16 And when she knew Peter's voice, she _____ the gate for gladness, but ran in, and told how Peter stood before the gate. And they said unto her, Thou art mad. But she constantly affirmed that it was even so. Then said they, It is his angel. But Peter _____: and when they had opened the door, and saw him, they were astonished.

15) Did Peter hang around?

Acts 12:17 But he, beckoning unto them with the hand to hold their _____, declared unto them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he said, Go _____ these things unto James, and to the brethren. And he departed, and went into another place.

In the morning a large concourse of people gathered to witness the execution of the apostle. Herod sent officers to the prison for Peter, who was to be brought with a great display of arms and guards in order not only to ensure against his escape, but to intimidate all sympathizers and to show the power of the king.

16) What happened?

Acts 12:18-19 Now as soon as it was day, there was no small stir among the _____, what was become of Peter. And when Herod had sought for him, and found him not, he examined the keepers, and commanded that they should be put to _____. And he went down from Judaea to Caesarea, and there abode.

When the keepers before the door found that Peter had escaped, they were seized with terror. It had been expressly stated that their lives would be required for the life of their charge, and because of this they had been especially vigilant. When the officers came for Peter, the soldiers were still at the door of the prison, the bolts and bars were still fast, the chains were still secured to the wrists of the two soldiers; but the prisoner was gone.



When the report of Peter's escape was brought to Herod, he was exasperated and enraged. Charging the prison guard with unfaithfulness, he ordered them to be put to death. **Herod knew that no human power had rescued Peter, but he was determined not to acknowledge that a divine power had frustrated his design**, and he set himself in bold defiance against God.

Not long after Peter's deliverance from prison, Herod went to Caesarea. While there he made a great festival designed to excite the admiration and gain the applause of the people. This festival was attended by pleasure lovers from all quarters, and there was much feasting and wine drinking.

17) How does the Bible describe it?

Acts 12:21-22 And upon a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne, and made an _____ unto them. And the people gave a shout, saying, It is the voice of a _____, and not of a man.

With great pomp and ceremony Herod appeared before the people and addressed them in an eloquent oration. Clad in a robe sparkling with silver and gold, which caught the rays of the sun in its glittering folds and dazzled the eyes of the beholders, he was a gorgeous figure. The majesty of his appearance and the force of his well-chosen language swayed the assembly with a mighty power. Their senses already perverted by feasting and wine drinking, they were dazzled by Herod's decorations and charmed by his deportment and oratory; and wild with enthusiasm they showered adulation upon him, declaring that no mortal could present such an appearance or command such startling eloquence. They further declared that while they had ever respected him as a ruler, henceforth they should worship him as a god.

18) What had many of those same voices cried out earlier?

John 19:6 When the chief priests therefore and officers saw him, they cried out, saying, _____ him, _____ him. Pilate saith unto them, Take ye him, and crucify him: for I find no fault in him.

The Jews had refused to receive Christ, whose garments, coarse and often travel-stained, covered a heart of divine love. Their eyes could not discern, under the humble exterior, the Lord of life and glory, even though Christ's power was revealed before them in works that no mere man could do. But they were ready to worship as a god the haughty king whose splendid garments of silver and gold covered a corrupt, cruel heart.

19) What happened as they worshipped Herod?

Acts 12:23 And immediately the angel of the Lord _____ him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of _____, and gave up the ghost.

Suddenly a terrible change came over him. His face became pallid as death and distorted with agony. Great drops of sweat started from his pores. He stood for a moment as if transfixed with pain and terror; then turning his blanched and livid face to his horror-stricken friends, he cried in hollow, despairing tones, He whom you have exalted as a god is stricken with death.

Suffering the most excruciating anguish, he was borne from the scene of revelry and display. A moment before he had been the proud recipient of the praise and worship of that vast throng; now he realized that he was in the hands of a Ruler mightier than himself. Remorse seized him; he remembered his relentless persecution of the followers of Christ; he remembered his cruel command to slay the innocent James, and his design to put to death the apostle Peter; he remembered how in his mortification and disappointed rage he had wreaked an unreasoning vengeance upon the prison guards. He felt that God was now dealing with him, the relentless persecutor. He found no relief from pain of body or anguish of mind, and he expected none.

20) What commandment had Herod violated?

Exodus 20:3 Thou shalt have no other _____ before me.



The same angel who had come from the royal courts to rescue Peter, had been the messenger of wrath and judgment to Herod. The angel smote Peter to arouse him from slumber; it was with a different stroke that he smote the wicked king, laying low his pride and bringing upon him the punishment of the Almighty. Herod died in great agony of mind and body, under the retributive judgment of God.

21) What promise do God's workmen have?

Psalm 34:7 The angel of the LORD _____ round about them that fear him, and delivereth them.

To the worker for God the record of these angel visits should bring strength and courage. Today, as verily as in the days of the apostles, heavenly messengers are passing through the length and breadth of the land, seeking to comfort the sorrowing, to protect the impenitent, to win the hearts of men to Christ. We cannot see them personally; nevertheless, they are with us, guiding, directing, and protecting.

22) How do the heavenly beings react when we turn to God?

Luke 15:7 I say unto you, that likewise _____ shall be in _____ over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.

A report is borne to heaven of every successful effort on our part to dispel the darkness and to spread abroad the knowledge of Christ. As the deed is recounted before the Father, joy thrills through all the heavenly host.

Can you see that God sees our trials?

Do you want to be under His care?

When is the time to go forward fearlessly?