



The Acts of the Apostles

The Journey – 2020
Jim Hoffman

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42 AD	Peter Led from Prison by the Angel	Acts 12
44 AD	Herod Agrippa Dies	Acts 12:20
48 AD	Paul's First Missionary Journey	Acts 13
48 AD	Paul preaches in Pisidian Antioch	Acts 13:14
48 AD	Paul and Barnabas in Iconium	Acts 14
48 AD	Paul and Barnabas in Lystra and Derbe	Acts 14:8
48 AD	Paul and Barnabas Return to Syrian Antioch	Acts 14:21
48 AD	Return to Syrian Antioch	Acts 14:24
48 AD	The Council at Jerusalem	Acts 15
49 AD	Paul's Second Missionary Journey	Acts 15:36

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The Acts of the Apostles

The Herods

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- Acts 12:1 About that time King Herod Agrippa began to persecute some believers in the church. 2 **He had the apostle James (John's brother) killed with a sword.** 3 **When Herod saw how much this pleased the Jewish people, he also arrested Peter.** (This took place during the Passover celebration.) 4 Then he imprisoned him, placing him under the guard of four squads of four soldiers each. Herod intended to bring Peter out for public trial after the Passover. 5 **But while Peter was in prison, the church prayed very earnestly for him.** NLT

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- Side note – both Jesus and John had brothers named James. The one killed here was John's brother.
- Agrippa had James killed with a sword – probably because the charges against him included “leading people to false gods”. (In this case Jesus)
- By definition, in the Talmud apostasy was punishable by death via the sword – Christianity equaled apostasy to Judaism.

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Is the Talmud the same as the Torah?

No. The TORAH is the divine Word of our Creator, penned by Moshe (the first five books of our bible). The Talmud is a collection of writings by the rabbis of the first century BCE. Now, the Talmud is SAID to be based on "the Oral Law" which was supposedly handed down by memory only, but this, too, is different from the written TORAH.

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- You can see Herod Agrippa's evilness by the fact that he wanted to kill Peter just because it was pleasing to the crowds when he killed James.
- Can you imagine what would have to happen in a person's mind to want to murder someone just to curry favor with the crowds?
- The Herods enjoyed privilege and power – power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely.

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Pop Quiz?

Why is it that God spared Peter, but allowed James to be murdered by Herod Agrippa?

(Peter had not yet finished his testimony. Rev 11:7)

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• “But while Peter was in prison, the church prayed very earnestly for him.”

• I know they didn’t believe it when their prayers were answered, but that doesn’t change the fact that their prayers were answered!

• Prayer **CAUSES** things to happen that otherwise would not happen without our prayers.

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• So what makes us pray “earnestly” as the early church prayed for Peter?

• We sometimes feel inundated with prayer requests – so many at times that we put the ones we deem to be of lesser value on the “casual” list. 😊

• The things that tend to get us to pray hard are grave threats, dire circumstances, and how connected we are to the person in need.

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• The NLT renders Acts 12:5 rather simply, perhaps too simply for my liking. (stretched out, assiduously)

• Acts 12:5 Peter was therefore kept in prison, but **constant prayer** was offered to God for him by the church. NKJV

• Acts 12:5 So Peter was kept in the prison, **but prayer for him was being made fervently** by the church to God. NASB

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- We are all capable of fervent and constant prayer for our needs and the needs of others – we just have to want to.

“When I pray, coincidences happen, and when I don't, they don't.” 😊
William Temple

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- In my life these days my prayers that fall into the fervent and constant category are the ones for my family and the ones you bring to me.
- Need I say it for the 100th time?
- If someone in my life is not healed or is not saved, or their needs are unmet, I am determined that it will never be because I did not ask – not on my watch!

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I plan to go out into eternity asking for God's interventions.

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• Acts 12:6 The night before Peter was to be placed on trial, **he was asleep**, fastened with two chains between two soldiers. Others stood guard at the prison gate. 7 Suddenly, there was a bright light in the cell, and an angel of the Lord stood before Peter. **The angel struck him on the side to awaken him and said, "Quick! Get up!"** And the chains fell off his wrists. 8 Then the angel told him, "Get dressed and put on your sandals." And he did. "Now put on your coat and follow me," the angel ordered. 9 So Peter left the cell, following the angel. But all the time he thought it was a vision. He didn't realize it was actually happening. 10 They passed the first and second guard posts **and came to the iron gate leading to the city, and this opened for them all by itself.** So they passed through and started walking down the street, and then the angel suddenly left him. NLT

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- Peter was sleeping the night before he goes on trial – it would be nothing more than a show trial before being killed with a sword as James was.
- After all Peter was preaching the same "false god" as James had been.
- But Peter does not seem to be anxious about what he faced for the angel that had to strike him on the side to awaken him.

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- One reason, perhaps the primary reason, Peter is able to "sleep like a baby" the night before he would be tried and sentenced to death is what Jesus said years ago.
- John 21:18 "I tell you the truth, when you were young, you were able to do as you liked; you dressed yourself and went wherever you wanted to go. **But when you are old**, you will stretch out your hands, and others will dress you and take you where you don't want to go." NLT

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- The angel comes with light – angels and light are often associated.
- The angel speaks Hebrew – tongues? We saw this before in this study in chapter 5 when the Apostles were sprung from jail.
- The angel has an awareness of the common – “put your clothes on”.

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- **“Suddenly, there was a bright light in the cell, and an angel of the Lord stood before Peter. The angel struck him on the side to awaken him and said, “Quick! Get up!” And the chains fell off his wrists.”**
- Evidently Angels can make lots of noise, shout commands, have lots of light, and yet suspend the senses of others they are not dealing with.
- How else do you explain the guards sleeping through all of the commotion it took to break Peter out of jail?

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- Given that this angel was able to open an iron gate it would seem they have power over those kind of elements as well.
- This small phrase, **“this opened for them all by itself”** has B I G things connected to it!
- Who gave the command to the gate to open? Maybe there was no command, but God began to will the molecules and atoms within the iron to move. (remember water to wine)

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- Acts 12:11 Peter finally came to his senses. "It's really true!" he said. "The Lord has sent his angel and saved me from Herod and from what the Jewish leaders had planned to do to me!" ¹²When he realized this, he went to the home of Mary, the mother of John Mark, where many were gathered for prayer. ¹³He knocked at the door in the gate, and a servant girl named Rhoda came to open it. ¹⁴When she recognized Peter's voice, she was so overjoyed that, instead of opening the door, she ran back inside and told everyone, "Peter is standing at the door!" ¹⁵"You're out of your mind!" they said. When she insisted, they decided, "It must be his angel." ¹⁶Meanwhile, Peter continued knocking. When they finally opened the door and saw him, they were amazed. ¹⁷He motioned for them to quiet down and told them how the Lord had led him out of prison. "Tell James and the other brothers what happened," he said. And then he went to another place. NLT

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- Rhoda and the disciples were so amazed that God answered their prayers that they didn't believe he did!
- They had seen lots of miracles and had other prayers answered why was this answer so hard to receive?
- Perhaps this one was hard to receive because this is the one prayer, if they had to choose just one to be answered, that they would prioritize for a "yes".

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- **"You're out of your mind!" they said. When she insisted, they decided, "It must be his angel."**
- It was a Jewish tradition, not a scriptural one, that every Jew had a guardian angel that could appear in the form of the one they were assigned to.
- I'm certain we have guardian angels, but being able to appear and look like us has no scriptural support.

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Guardian Angels

Matthew 18:10 "Beware that you don't look down on any of these little ones. For I tell you that in heaven **their angels** are always in the presence of my heavenly Father." NLT

At Bible Hub there is zero variance in their twenty plus translations that the correct English pronoun is the plural possessive "their".

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- **"When they finally opened the door and saw him, they were amazed."**
- I've heard people say this is insulting to God – that we would be amazed when he answers, but I doubt he is.
- Does it not magnify him more when we discover in real time that he is able to do exceedingly, abundantly, above all that we ask or think? (to quote the Apostle Paul)

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- Peter tells the disciples what happened and then left for an unidentified site presumably because there was a "price on his head".
- After this scene in Acts 12 Peter will make one more cameo appearance in Acts 15 – but beyond that he fades to the background.
- He writes his two epistles at nearly the same time as Luke was writing Acts which is probably why Luke is vague about where he went after the leaving Mary's house in Acts 12. (it was for Peter's safety)

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• Acts 12:18 At dawn there was a great commotion among the soldiers about what had happened to Peter. 19 Herod Agrippa ordered a thorough search for him. When he couldn't be found, Herod interrogated the guards and sentenced them to death. Afterward Herod left Judea to stay in Caesarea for a while. 20 Now Herod was very angry with the people of Tyre and Sidon. So they sent a delegation to make peace with him because their cities were dependent upon Herod's country for food. The delegates won the support of Blastus, Herod's personal assistant. 21 and an appointment with Herod was granted. When the day arrived, Herod put on his royal robes, sat on his throne, and made a speech to them. 22 The people gave him a great ovation, shouting, "It's the voice of a god, not of a man!" 23 Instantly, an angel of the Lord struck Herod with a sickness, because he accepted the people's worship instead of giving the glory to God. So he was consumed with worms and died. 24 Meanwhile, the word of God continued to spread, and there were many new believers. 25 When Barnabas and Saul had finished their mission to Jerusalem, they returned, taking John Mark with them. NLT

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- At dawn there was a great commotion among the soldiers ... I bet there was!
- Herod will be embarrassed that his prisoner got away and the guards will be terrified of him and for good reason.
- You have to feel bad for these guards – they did nothing wrong, they did their job, but were in God's way.

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- **“they sent a delegation to make peace with him because their cities were dependent upon Herod's country for food”.**
- Since their regions would starve without Herod's help the people of Tyre and Sidon had to come “make nice” with a low life dictator.
- Herod is dumb enough to think they actually came hear him spout off like the bag of wind that he was.

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- The delegates cry, **“It’s the voice of a god, not of a man!”** That is what they said, but allow me to interpret.
- **“Herod, you are capricious tyrant that we would just as soon not have to see, but since you have the food we need we will pretend you are awesome!”**
- **“Instantly, an angel of the Lord struck Herod with a sickness, because he accepted the people’s worship instead of giving the glory to God.”**

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- **Meanwhile, the word of God continued to spread, and there were many new believers. 25 When Barnabas and Saul had finished their mission to Jerusalem, they returned, taking John Mark with them. NLT**
- Peter was used to help start the church, but will soon find out that while everyone is needed, no one person is necessary.
- By the way, the “Mark” mentioned here is the same man who would go on to write one of the four gospels.

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Questions

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