

# **SUBJECT : PETER ESCAPES PRISON**

## **BIBLE BASIS:**

Lesson Scripture:

Acts 12:1-17

## **BIBLE TRUTH:**

God can provide escape from a seemingly impossible situations.

**MEMORY VERSE: READ Acts  
12:7**

## **LESSON AIM:**

That you will realize that God intervenes when you are in adverse situations

# Introduction

- This was the *first political attack* against the church. It had been about *eight years* since Stephen's death and the first persecution against the church. The persecution had been squelched by the hand of God in converting the arch-persecutor himself, Saul of Tarsus Acts 9:1-9. However, throughout the eight years, feelings against the church had been growing until they reached the present peak Acts 12:11. The people were filled with animosity toward Christian believers. There were two primary reasons for their hatred. The public just did not understand...
- The teachings of Jesus and His followers: The law being fulfilled in Christ and being justified by faith was a real challenge to the Jewish religion.
- The evangelistic outbreak of the church: that Jewish believers would be so full of fervor for Christ that they would reach out to convert the whole world. Apparently, the conversion of Cornelius and the founding of churches throughout the Gentile world upset some of the Jews to no end.
- Herod, being the shrewd politician he was, saw an opportunity to please the Jews by persecuting and seeking to destroy the church.

# What Does Politics Have To Do With The Church?

- Acts 12:1-2 Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church. [2] And he killed James the brother of John with the sword.
- **Herod Agrippa I** He was the grandson of Herod the Great who had tried to kill the baby Jesus by murdering all the children. Matt. 2:3-4.
- He was born about 10 B.C., reared and educated in Rome. He became king over Palestine and ruled between A.D. 41-44.
- He sought the popularity of the Jewish people by pretending to be a Jewish convert. He publicly kept the Jewish law and feasts, seeking the support and loyalty of the people. It was this that caused him to turn against the church. He was seeking the favor of the people, their approval and loyalty Acts 12:3. Herod was a shrewd politician, able to maneuver and manipulate people to his advantage.
- Politic and Government represents authority in this earthly realm. I am convinced that believers are to be involved in the political process beyond just voting. Samuel, Joseph, Daniel, David, Esther, all were involved in the political process of their day. Matt. 16:18
- Is a tax exempt status worth the impact the church could have if it was not concerned about its tax exempt status?

# These Jews Rejected Christ

- [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.
- The persecution of the church's leaders pleased the Jews, especially the murder of one of the Lord's leading apostles. Herod's plan seemed to be working. It was the days of unleavened bread. Passover
- Hundreds of thousands of pilgrims had flooded into the city of Jerusalem. The people were filled with a festive, merry spirit. Herod had a unique chance to really gain popularity among the people.
- Herod was so elated with the response of the Jews, he went forward with the boldest plot imaginable: the arrest and jailing of *the leader* himself, Peter the apostle. Note: Herod was planning to execute Peter after the Passover. Jewish law did not allow executions during the Passover Feast. This was Peter's third imprisonment for the sake of his Lord Acts 4:3; Acts 5:18; Acts 12:4-5.
- Peter was guarded by sixteen different soldiers. Four soldiers at a time served two separate three-hour watches within a twenty-four hour stretch. Note the extra security with Peter: both wrists were chained (Acts 12:6). The reason for the extra security, Herod felt some of Peter's friends might attempt a rescue.

# Time To Pray

- [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.
- Note the Church prayed not Churches specifically for Peter's deliverance. The whole church was praying. James 5:16
- The words "without ceasing" mean fervently and earnestly continuing in prayer. The root meaning of the word is "to stretch out." The picture is that the church was stretched out, prostrate before God, earnestly and fervently crying out to Him for God's sovereign deliverance of Peter.
- There is the pattern of confidence. Confidence in God's will and care delivered Peter (Acts 12:6). Note that Peter was asleep, and it was the very night before his execution. Christ was meeting His dear servant's need, infusing him with His very special grace and peace. Peter sensed the very special trust and care of his Lord.
- The Lord gives him strength, peace, care, understanding, and marvelous grace to go through whatever trial confronts His dear servant. 1Cor. 10:13

# Answer To A Prayer

- [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. [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. [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..
- There is the pattern of God's miraculous work and the believer's obedience. Both were involved in delivering Peter
- The angel did not do for Peter what Peter could do for himself. Peter had to act; he had to obey the commands of the angel.
- Once Peter was safely delivered out of danger, he was left on his own, left to work out his own deliverance. He was to continue his "walk by faith"...to return to the church and to the believers on his own..to seek the Lord about remaining or leaving Jersusalem and in making any other decisions that needed to be made.
-

# Walking With Angels

- [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 [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.
- The point is this: God's miraculous deliverance involved only *what Peter could not do for himself*. When Peter was helpless, God then took over. This is the point of miracles. Miracles are acts of God, acts that men cannot do for themselves. They are worked by God and by Him alone; therefore, He and He alone gets the praise and honor.
- It was God's sovereign will for Peter to be delivered. It was not His will for James to be delivered. The true believer rests in God's sovereign will, knowing that God's will results in the greatest blessings.
- Peter thought he was having a vision, that he was in some semi-conscious state, dreaming of God delivering him. Peter was startled; it took a moment to collect his thoughts and grasp what had happened. When he did, he realized...that God had delivered him by His sovereign will...that God still had a purpose for him on earth...that he still had a ministry to perform for the Lord.

# A Prayer Meeting

- [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. [13] And as Peter knocked at the door of the gate, a damsel came to hearken, named Rhoda.
- He quickly sized up the situation and fled the city, for he knew Herod would have the soldiers searching for him as soon as his escape was discovered. But before fleeing, Peter decided to quickly visit the house of Mary (the mother of John Mark), hoping some of the believers were gathered there. He needed to let them know God had delivered him and where he was fleeing
- Mary was also the aunt of Barnabas Col. 4:10. This is the only clear mention of her in Scripture. She was apparently wealthy, the owner of considerable property. She owned a huge house large enough for believers to hold services there. There was also a gate and a portress to greet guests who entered the home. This may point to a palace-like house.
- Apparently Mary was a very godly mother, rearing her son John Mark in the gospel. She eventually encouraged him to commit his life to missions just as Paul and Barnabas, his cousin, had done.
- .



# An Answer To A Prayer

- [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. [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
- Note how the church had been praying ever so fervently, yet not really expecting a miracle. We must not be too critical, however. They had already witnessed the death of some outstanding leaders, two of which are named, Stephen the deacon and James the apostle.
- Again, note how God expects His people to *work out their own salvation* (deliverance) when it is in their power to do so. Now note the result of God delivering His dear servant. James 5:16. Matt 18:19.
- Never give up the power to pray. As long as there is life there is hope. Any situation that is contrary to how things are in heaven we have been give the authority to pray against it. John 15:16