

**"Satan's Next Attack"**

**Part 2**

**Acts 12**

**Introduction:** Last week in our study of Acts we started into Acts 12 where we find another attack by Satan upon the church. Satan's tool in this chapter was fear. The church at Antioch was growing in the power and grace of God as Saul and Barnabas ministered to the new believers. The believers at Antioch showed their love to the Jews at Jerusalem by sending money in the face of the famine. It was in the middle of the spiritual growth that Herod was moved by Satan to kill James the brother of John.

**Notice Acts 12:1-2**

We know this was from Satan because it was focused upon the church. It was not an attack against James personally but it was an attempt to vex/harm or hurt the church. Satan picked one of the pillars of the church and used Herod to end his life. It was Satan's desire to strike fear in the hearts of the believers to keep them from sharing the Gospel and their faith. Last week we considered how Satan uses fear in the church today and it is a very effective tool and the reason is because many people lack faith. This now brings us to where we are going to begin tonight.

➤ **The Capture of Peter**

**Notice Acts 12:3-4**

Herod wanted to win the praise of the people and when he saw that the Jews were pleased that he killed James he then went on to arrest Peter. Notice the words of Matthew Henry on how this pleased the Jews.

*"The Jews made themselves guilty of the blood of James by showing themselves well pleased with it afterwards, though they had not excited Herod to it. There are accessories ex post facto-after the fact; and those will be reckoned with as persecutors who take pleasure in others' persecuting, who delight to see good men ill-used, and cry, Aha, so would we have it, or at least secretly approve of it. For bloody persecutors (LIKE HEROD), when they perceive themselves applauded for that which everyone ought to cry shame upon them for, are encouraged to go on, and have their hands strengthened and their hearts hardened, and the checks of their own consciences smothered."*

**2 John 1:10-11**

<sup>10</sup> *If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed:*

<sup>11</sup> *For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.*

When we support someone who is promoting sin then we too are guilty of the deeds they are doing.

**Notice Acts 12:3 again.**

The parentheses at the end of this verse are very important. We are told that Peter's arrest happened in the days of Unleavened Bread. These were the days of Passover. This is what preserved Peter's life. It would have been against the Jewish law to put Peter to death during the Passover.

**Notice Acts 12:3-4 again.**

Herod was very sly. He had a plan behind the arrest of Peter. He had him arrested during Passover because he knew the city would be flooded with many Jews.

**Deuteronomy 16:16**

<sup>16</sup> *Three times in a year shall all thy males appear before the LORD thy God in the place which he shall choose; in the feast of unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks, and in the feast of tabernacles: and they shall not appear before the LORD empty:*

Herod knew this and he knew that the tide had turned between the Jewish people and the church. When the church began and the miracles were performed the people were excited about the church. But now the "honeymoon" was over. The attitude had changed and the nation had turned the corner as they were against Jesus Christ and His church. Let me give you something to consider here that shows the irony in this scene.

The Passover was a time to celebrate how God had delivered the nation from the hand of a wicked ruler that we know as Pharaoh. Now, during this celebration the people are pleased that one of their own people had been placed in prison by a wicked ruler by the name of Herod. The Passover was a time to celebrate deliverance and here are the Jews "celebrating" because one of their own is being held in prison. Notice the words of John Phillips.

*"The Jews were required to scour their houses to make sure no corrupting leaven remained. Thus, while the Jews were ridding their houses of leaven in accordance with*

*their ritual law, their hearts were fermenting with the hidden leaven of malice and wickedness."*

Before we move on, I want to go back to James again. He was killed with beheaded with the sword. Let me show you a request by his mother.

**Matthew 20:20-24**

*<sup>20</sup> Then came to him the mother of Zebedees children with her sons, worshipping him, and desiring a certain thing of him.*

*<sup>21</sup> And he said unto her, What wilt thou? She saith unto him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom.*

*<sup>22</sup> But Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? They say unto him, We are able.*

*<sup>23</sup> And he saith unto them, Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with: but to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father.*

*<sup>24</sup> And when the ten heard it, they were moved with indignation against the two brethren.*

Here in Acts 12 James is baptized with the baptism that Jesus prophesied. If James' mother was alive at this time I wonder if she connected the conversation with Jesus and the death of her son?

Getting back to our text, James is arrested and killed and Peter is arrested and through prayer is set free.

**Application:**

This is a good reminder to all of us that God has different plans for our lives. James was killed by Herod but his brother John would live to go on and write his epistles and the book of Revelation toward the end of the first century. Our lives are in the hands of God and He has appointed a set time upon which we shall walk on this earth in these bodies. For one it may be to live to be 90+ and to another he appoints a short life maybe to be taken in the teenage years or earlier.

**Job 15:1-5**

*Man that is born of a woman is of few days and full of trouble.*

<sup>2</sup> *He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down: he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not.*

<sup>3</sup> *And doth thou open thine eyes upon such an one, and bringest me into judgment with thee?*

<sup>4</sup> *Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one.*

<sup>5</sup> **Seeing his days are determined, the number of his months are with thee, thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass;**

Let us notice a conversation between Peter and the Lord.

**John 21:18-22**

<sup>18</sup> *Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdest thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not.*

<sup>19</sup> *This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me.*

<sup>20</sup> *Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following; which also leaned on his breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee?*

<sup>21</sup> *Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do?*

<sup>22</sup> *Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? **follow thou me.***

Our responsibility in the light of this Truth is to follow Jesus and serve Him. Whitcomb has said, "It is not how long we live but how well we live."

Notice Acts 12:4 again.

Peter was guarded by four quaternions of soldiers. Notice the details.

*"Each quaternion was a detachment of four soldiers, so that Peter was guarded by sixteen different soldiers. Four soldiers at a time served two separate three-hour watches within a twenty-four hour stretch. One wrist of the prisoner was usually chained to the wrist of a guard, but in Peter's case he appears to be chained to two guards!*

**Notice Acts 12:6**

This verse supports the thought that Peter was chained to two guards at one time. This seems to be such overkill but Herod had a reason for what he did.

**Acts 5:18-22**

*18 And laid their hands on the apostles, and put them in the common prison.*

*19 But the angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors, and brought them forth, and said,*

*20 Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life.*

*21 And when they heard that, they entered into the temple early in the morning, and taught. But the high priest came, and they that were with him, and called the council together, and all the senate of the children of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought.*

*22 But when the officers came, and found them not in the prison, they returned and told,*

Herod had heard of this previous escape by the Apostles and now he was determined that Peter would not escape from his prison. But Herod does not understand that he is standing opposed to God and human means is nothing for God to foil.

**Notice Acts 12:5**

Notice the contrast in this verse. We see the power of man matched against the power of prayer. Let us not miss the significance of the little word "BUT" in the middle of this verse. God has placed it here to get our attention. He desires for us to see the initial response of the early church and the power of prayer. Notice the words of Stott.

*"Here then were two communities, the world, and the church, arrayed against one another, each wielding an appropriate weapon. On the one side was the authority of Herod, the power of the sword and the security of the prison. On the other side, the church turned to prayer, which is the only power which the powerless possess."*

This would be a great passage and verse for many churches to study today. So many have stopped their prayer services on Wednesday evenings and the reason is because of a lack of attendance. In doing this they have cut their "power line" to spiritual needs within the church. The Bible teaches us over and over again to the importance of prayer. Here in this passage, we see the power of corporate prayer among God's people.

**James 5:16b-18**

*The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.*

*<sup>17</sup> Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months.*

*<sup>18</sup> And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.*

The early church in Acts 12 prayed without ceasing. They were determined to reach the throne of God for Peter's protection.

**Conclusion:**

I want to come back to this next week and look closer at prayer and to look at the details as to how God set Peter free. As we close out, I want to share a story from the Daily Bread by Dave Branon that should touch each of us.

*Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him. - Acts 12:5*

*I looked at my watch. To my dismay, it was 1:45 in the afternoon. I had promised my daughter Lisa, who was playing the piano in a competition for college scholarships at 1:30, that I would pray for her. I got busy, though, and forgot all about it. By 1:45 I knew she had already finished.*

*I sat at my desk with a feeling of lingering emptiness. I felt as if I had failed her. I knew that the only possible way I could have assisted Lisa during her competition was to ask God to calm her and help her recall the music she had practiced so long and hard to master.*

*As I contemplated this situation, I was reminded of how important prayer is as a link with those we cannot reach. By talking to the Lord about a friend or loved one's needs, we have a unique opportunity to make a difference in their lives— even though we can't be with them in person. What an amazing concept!*

*No matter what the circumstances of our friends or family members who are away from us, prayer is always an effective way we can support them and be of help. It worked for the people who prayed for Peter (Acts 12), and it can work for us.*