

"Satan's Next Attack"

Part 3

Acts 12

Introduction: When we stopped our study last week, James was dead and Peter had been arrested. Herod longed for the applause of the Jews and when he took James and had him executed, he seen that it pleased the people and therefore he then arrested Peter and placed him in prison. It was the time of the Passover and his plan was to bring Peter out to the people after Passover and have him executed.

Notice Acts 12:1-4

Last week we were reminded that the Jews here were just as guilty as Herod. He fed off of their applause which caused him to go even further and arrest Peter. Let me show you the words of Matthew Henry again.

"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."

Then we came to verse 5 where we see a contrast.

➤ **The Church in Prayer**

Notice Acts 12:5

The word "but" in this verse is here to catch our attention. Satan was working through Herod and the Jews BUT the church was praying. This tells us that the story line is about to turn. The Spirit of God inspired Dr. Luke to record what is here to show us, the church, the power of prayer.

Notice Acts 12:6

As this verse opens, we see first of all the timing. It is the 11th hour for Peter. He is not far from being brought out before the people and then be executed. God has waited until the last moment to act.

Application:

God's timing is always perfect. He is never too early and He is never too late but He is always right on time. With this Truth we can also be sure that God's grace is always sufficient. When God waits until the 11th hour to move it is for His glory.

John 11:1-6

Now a certain man was sick, named Lazarus, of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha.

² (It was that Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.)

³ Therefore his sisters sent unto him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick.

⁴ When Jesus heard that, he said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby.

⁵ Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus.

⁶ When he had heard therefore that he was sick, he abode two days still in the same place where he was.

When Jesus heard of the sickness of Lazarus, He waited two days before He would go to see him. By that time, he was dead and it would be through the resurrection of Lazarus that God would be glorified. Jesus was not late even though Lazarus had died. It was all planned and it would all be for God's glory. The situation of Peter was the same in the sense that God waited until right before Peter would die to set him free and it was all for the glory of God.

We see this also in the life of Abraham when God waited until Abraham and Sarah were both beyond the childbearing years and it was then that Sarah became pregnant with Isaac.

Genesis 18:10-14

¹⁰ And he said, I will certainly return unto thee according to the time of life; and, lo, Sarah thy wife shall have a son. And Sarah heard it in the tent door, which was behind him.

¹¹ Now Abraham and Sarah were old and well stricken in age; and it ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women.

¹² Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, After I am waxed old shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?

¹³ And the LORD said unto Abraham, Wherefore did Sarah laugh, saying, Shall I of a surety bear a child, which am old?

¹⁴ Is any thing too hard for the LORD? At the time appointed I will return unto thee, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son.

Notice Acts 12:6 again.

It is interesting to notice that Peter was sleeping. This was right before he was to be executed. He knew what had happened to James and he knew what Herod's intentions were toward him. How could Peter sleep?

The sleep that Peter was enjoying was a gift from God.

Psalm 127:2

² It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: for so he giveth his beloved sleep.

Peter could sleep because he was a man filled with the Spirit. His faith was resting in his Lord. Psalm 121 paints a beautiful picture of what took place in the prison.

Psalm 121:1-8

I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help.

² My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth.

³ He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: he that keepeth thee will not slumber.

⁴ Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.

⁵ The LORD is thy keeper: the LORD is thy shade upon thy right hand.

⁶ The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night.

⁷ The LORD shall preserve thee from all evil: he shall preserve thy soul.

⁸ The LORD shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore.

Peter was chained with two chains, flanked by two soldiers. God allowed the enemy to have the upper hand, and in the midst of this Peter was asleep. He was not tossing and turning about what was going to happen, he was not questioning what God was doing, Peter was resting. He was resting in God's promises.

Isaiah 26:3

³ Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.

Isaiah 41:10

¹⁰ Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.

Psalms 46:10

¹⁰ Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.

Peter knew the principle that Paul would later speak of in Philippians.

Philippians 4:11-13

¹¹ Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.

¹² I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.

¹³ I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

The same peace that Peter had here is available to each of us when we are in high pressure situations. It is a calm rest that washes over the soul of the believer when their faith is resting in the promises of God.

Psalms 4:8

⁸ I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, LORD, only makest me dwell in safety.

Acts 12:7-8

There are several thoughts to consider from these verses.

First it is important to notice that Peter was helped by an angel.

Hebrews 1:13-14

¹³ *But to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool?*

¹⁴ **Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?**

Throughout the Bible we can clearly see the ministry of angels in the lives of believers.

Jacob was protected by an angel.

Genesis 48:14-16

¹⁴ *And Israel stretched out his right hand, and laid it upon Ephraim's head, who was the younger, and his left hand upon Manasseh's head, guiding his hands wittingly; for Manasseh was the firstborn.*

¹⁵ *And he blessed Joseph, and said, God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed me all my life long unto this day,*

¹⁶ **The Angel which redeemed me from all evil**, *bless the lads; and let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth.*

Daniel was protected from the lions by an angel.

Daniel 6:21-22

²¹ *Then said Daniel unto the king, O king, live for ever.*

²² **My God hath sent his angel**, *and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt.*

Little children have angels that watch over them and report to God when they are mistreated.

Matthew 18:10

¹⁰ *Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven **their angels** do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.*

Paul had an angel that encouraged him in the midst of the storm.

Acts 27:23-24

²³ For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve,

²⁴ Saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee.

Jesus was ministered to by an angel when He was exhausted from the spiritual battle in the garden.

Luke 22:41-44

⁴¹ And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed,

⁴² Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.

⁴³ And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him.

⁴⁴ And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

The second thing to consider as Peter is set free is, "Did he share the Gospel with these guards?"

Notice Acts 12:19

These guards died when the daylight came. This was the last opportunity for anyone to share the Gospel with them.

Conclusion/Application:

Have you ever considered that the person God sets you next to may die before you ever see them again? Possibly God placed us next to them because we were the extension of His grace to them as He wanted us to tell them about Jesus.