

## **The First Apostle Martyred and the Second Attempted (Acts 12:1-25)**

### I. Introduction

#### A. *This Week in Clear Living*

1. Herod directed James's execution and Peter's imprisonment (12:1-4)
2. An angel rescued Peter from prison (12:5-17)
3. Herod's pride caused his violent death (12:18-25)

**Question:** Why did Herod kill James? Was that Herod the same as the one that killed all the babies when Jesus was born?

#### B. Herod tried to show his power by going against the church.

1. Stretched (*epiballo*) - used of seizing one to lead him off as a prisoner or to throw one's self upon.
2. Vex (*kakoo*) - to oppress, afflict, harm, or render evil affected.
3. In verse 2, he killed James, the brother of John.

#### C. According to John Foxe (Foxes Book of Martyrs), all of the original disciples and many of the key leaders of the church were martyred because of their faith. Only the Apostle John was spared such a horrible death. He died a natural death at Ephesus.

1. *James was beheaded by Herod Agrippa after someone brought false accusations against him (44 AD).*
2. *Philip was scourged and crucified at Hierapolis after having led many of the townspeople to Christ (52 AD).*
3. *Matthew was killed by the sword in Parthia (60 AD).*
4. *Mark was dragged by his feet through the streets of Alexandria and burned to death.*
5. *James, the brother of Jesus, was stoned to death by a Jewish mob in Jerusalem.*
6. *Matthias (Acts 1:26) was stoned and beheaded in Jerusalem.*
7. *Andrew was crucified in Greece. He survived on the cross for three days because they tied him rather than nail him, and his death was extremely painful.*
8. *Peter was scourged and crucified upside down (by choice) by Nero (62 AD).*
9. *Paul was beheaded on Nero's order (62 AD).*
10. *Thomas was thrust through with a spear in either Parthia or India.*

#### D. Four Herods reigned from the time of Jesus' birth until the development of the early church (A General Introduction to the New Testament by Dr. James Borland).

1. Herod the Great (born 73 BC)
  - a. His father had helped Julius Caesar in battle, so Mark Anthony and Octavius Caesar rewarded Herod by giving him the territory of Jerusalem, **if he could handle the Jews.**

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- b. Herod took control of Galilee and three years later took Jerusalem.
  - c. He died around March, 4BC.
  - d. Jesus was born before Herod the great died.
  - e. Herod the Great tried to have Jesus killed when He was still a baby.
  2. Herod Archelaus (son)
    - a. He took his father's place in 4 BC and ruled until 6 AD.
    - b. Joseph and Mary returned from Egypt.
    - c. Herod Archelaus was very evil toward the Jews.
    - d. He was removed by Caesar Augustus.
  3. *Herod Antipas (son)*
    - a. *He built Tiberius to honor Caesar Tiberius.*
    - b. *He had John the Baptist beheaded (Matthew 14:3-11)*
    - c. *He reigned from 6 AD until 39 AD.*
  4. *Herod Agrippa I (grandson)*
    - a. *He made James the first martyr of the church.*
    - b. *He tried to kill Peter.*
    - c. *The Jews loved him because he stuck close to the Jewish laws.*
    - d. *He reigned from 39 AD until his sudden death in 44 AD. He was eaten up by worms.*
  5. Herod Agrippa II (great grandson) - almost persuaded to become a Christian (Acts 26:28).
- E. In verses 3-4, Herod arrested Peter and was to have him killed the next day.

**Question:** How did Peter escape from prison? Why did the angel tell Peter to gird himself and bind his sandals?

- II. Peter was miraculously delivered from Herod.
- A. Notice some of the more important actions and emotions.
    1. In verse 5, the church was actively praying for Peter.
    2. In verse 6, Peter was peacefully sleeping between two guards on the night before he was supposed to be executed.
      - a. He had perfect peace about his death.
      - b. **Clearly Peter was a new creature in Christ.**
      - c. He might have remembered what Jesus had told him in John 21:18.
    3. In verse 7, the angel loosed the chains from Peter while also keeping the two guards asleep.
    4. In verse 8, the angel told Peter to get dressed and put on his sandals.
      - a. In God's economy, He always does those things for us that we cannot do for ourselves.
      - b. He leaves for us those things that we can do.
      - c. Peter was able to gird himself and put on his sandals. **He was not able to release his chains while at the same time not disturbing the guards.**

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**B. We should keep a mental record of those times that the Lord has done things for us that we could not have done for ourselves.**

**1. Such events give opportunity to witness for the Lord.**

**2. Such events help us grow closer to the Lord and learn to trust Him more.**

C. In verses 9-11, Peter walked out the prison and realized what the Lord had done for him.

D. In verses 12-17, Peter went to be with the other believers.

1. He did not try to get out of town to save his life.

2. Verse 17 is the basis for sharing our faith with others.

a. What has the Lord done for you?

b. When and how did you get saved?

c. What does your salvation mean to you?

**Question:** How did Herod die?

III. In verses 18-24, Herod died suddenly.

A. Herod was agitated because of Peter's escape.

B. He had the guards executed for letting their prisoner escape.

C. In verses 21-24, Herod sat in royal apparel before the people.

1. He made a speech that very much moved the crowd.

2. They called him a god.

a. God (*theos*) - whatever can in any respect be likened unto God, or resemble him in any way.

b. Herod accepted their worship, and the Lord struck him down.

c. He was eaten of worms.

D. Jesus accepted worship, and He was not struck down by God.

E. In verse 24, the word of God grew and people got saved.

1. Stephen died an untimely death.

2. James died an untimely death.

3. But both men accomplished much for the Lord by sacrificing their lives for Him.

4. Matthew 16:25 says, "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it."

**Question:** From where were Barnabas and Saul returning?

IV. In verse 25, Barnabas and Saul were returning from their trip to Jerusalem.

A. The Lord had not rewarded their commune lifestyle.

B. John Mark came back with them. He would accompany them on their first journey.

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V. Next week's lesson: "The First Missionary Journey" (Acts 13:1-52; 14:1-28)

### Five Day Recommended Reading:

Monday:	Acts 13:1-22
Tuesday:	Acts 13:23-37
Wednesday:	Acts 13:38-52
Thursday:	Acts 14:1-12
Friday:	Acts 14:13-28

### Study questions:

1. Who decided that Paul and Barnabas should go on a missionary journey?
2. In verses 9-11, did Paul hear an audible voice from the Lord? If not, then did people like Abraham and Moses hear audible voices?
3. In verse 22, why was David described as a man after God's own heart? He committed adultery and then had the wife's husband killed. Is that a picture of God's heart?
4. Why did the Jews reject Paul's message?
5. Why did the Gentiles receive Paul's message?
6. Where was Paul stoned and left for dead? Do you think that he was actually dead?
7. What did he do when he rose up?
8. How was the Holy Spirit building Jesus' church in this lesson?
9. How was the Holy Spirit showing His deity in this lesson?