

THE MINISTRY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Doctrine and Duty for Disciples Series

Acts of the Apostles

"Herod the Harasser"

Acts 12:1-12

James Martyred

12 Now about that time Herod the king stretched out *his* hand to harass some from the church. ² Then he killed James the brother of John with the sword. ³ And because he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to seize Peter also. Now it was *during* the Days of Unleavened Bread. ⁴ So when he had arrested him, he put *him* in prison, and delivered *him* to four squads of soldiers to keep him, intending to bring him before the people after Passover.

Peter Freed

⁵ Peter was therefore kept in prison, but constant prayer was offered to God for him by the church. ⁶ And when Herod was about to bring him out, that night Peter was sleeping, bound with two chains between two soldiers; and the guards before the door were keeping the prison. ⁷ Now behold, an angel of the Lord stood by *him*, and a light shone in the prison; and he struck Peter on the side and raised him up, saying, "Arise quickly!" And his chains fell off *his* hands. ⁸ Then the angel said to him, "Gird yourself and tie on your sandals"; and so he did. And he said to him, "Put on your garment and follow me." ⁹ So he went out and followed him, and did not know that what was done by the angel was real, but thought he was seeing a vision. ¹⁰ When they were past the first and the second guard posts, they came to the iron gate that leads to the city, which opened to them of its own accord; and they went out and went down one street, and immediately the angel departed from him. ¹¹ And when Peter had come to himself, he said, "Now I know for certain that the Lord has sent His angel, and has delivered me from the hand of Herod and *from* all the expectation of the Jewish people." ¹² So, when he had considered *this*, he came to the house of Mary, the mother of John whose surname was Mark, where many were gathered together praying.

1. What was Herod's motivation for harassing Christians? How is Herod's actions parallel to modern day politicians? Give some examples.
2. James was one of Jesus' three most intimate friends, yet he was the first apostle to be martyred.
 - a. How is this relevant to Matthew 10:16-26?
 - b. How does this fulfill the James' request noted in Mark 10:35-40?
3. What extra measures were taken to secure Peter's imprisonment, and why? (Hint: Acts 5:17-21)
4. What is a "constant prayer"? Does this mean a repetitious prayer? Discuss why or why not? (Matthew 6:7, 1 Thessalonians 5:17, Luke 18:1-7.)
5. We see in these verses that corporate prayer is powerful. Brainstorm and choose three items we should have, as a corporate prayer for our church, for the upcoming Prayer Day at CFB. Share this list with your flock leader.
6. Why do you suppose Peter was delivered from the Herod but allowed James to be martyred?
7. How did Peter respond: 1) being in prison 2) being let out of prison 3) being out of prison? How were his actions honoring to God? How would you like to become more like Peter?