

The Acts of the Apostles

Chapter Twelve

The Church Learns to Pray

Focus Verse: Acts 12:5

“Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him.”

I. Study Introduction

- A. Christianity must learn to live more by prayer and dependence upon GOD than upon apostles, prophets, and miracles!
- B. Every religion has its faith-healers, and charismatic prophets, but Christianity has **Christ!** It is a lazy person who just “expects” God to “take care” of the situations that arise in their lives, instead of learning to pray, and humble themselves, and mean business with God!

II. Chapter Review

- One **The Church Commissioned** - The Ascension of Jesus
- Two **The Church Empowered** - The Day of Pentecost
- Three **Christianity Meets The Need** - The Invalid Man Healed
- Four **How To Stand-Up For Christ** - Handling Persecution
- Five **Staying True!** In Spite of Sin in Christian’s Lives
- Six **Delegating the Work** - Choosing Deacons
- Seven **Learning the Lessons of History** - Stephen’s Attack on Religion
- Eight **The Church Expanding** - Saul Begins His Persecution
- Nine **The Conversion of Saul** - Saul on the Road to Damascus
- Ten **Cornelius Meets Christ** - Peter Tells Cornelius About Christ
- Eleven **The First Christians** - The Birth of the Church at Antioch

I. Study Outline - The Church Learns to Pray (Acts 12)

A. The Death of the Apostle James (12:1-3)

1. Background Information:
 - a. Who is **Herod**? A Roman-puppet king over the area all around Israel. The name “Herod” was like the title “Caesar.” This is the same Herod who had John the Baptist beheaded, and mocked Jesus at His crucifixion (Luke 23:11,12)
 - b. Who is this **James**? He is part of the trio of apostles named together as Peter, JAMES, and John. A fisherman with great faith and fervour for the Lord. He wrote the epistle “James”
2. The Reasons for James’ death - Why would God allow it?
 - a. The church needed to live more by _____ and dependence upon GOD than upon the apostles, and miracles!
 - b. The Roman government wanted the Jewish leaders back under their control - scratched each other’s back (see 24:27)
 - c. Herod wanted to get the Christian’s attention, so he picked an important leader to kill - to strike _____ in them (Mt 10:28)
3. The Lessons from James’ Death
 - a. No Christian is _____. We do not have power over troubles - we are not invincible! Your life is in God’s hands! As long as God has a purpose for us, and we are willing to fulfill that purpose, that is when we are unstoppable.
 - b. Don’t expect fair treatment. There was no trial - just a brutal stabbing. If there had been a trial he would have been beheaded. Religions love to get governments to do their “dirty-work” (ie, murder, torture) like the Jews had Rome kill Christ, and now James, and like Rome did in the dark ages!
 - c. No _____ is made! Judas is replaced because he never was a true apostle - he was a devil incarnate (John 6:70)
 - d. No _____ break out. Christians do not riot when mis-treated.

B. The Deliverance of the Apostle Peter (12:3-19)

1. His Capture (12:3-5)
 - a. Massive police operation - 16 elite soldiers swiftly apprehend Peter and place him straight into prison
 - b. Four soldiers (quaternion) are on constant guard at any one time - two were chained directly to Peter - Herod did not want Peter getting away like he had before in Acts 5:17-20.
2. The Holydays (12:3,4) - can’t interrupt the festivities!

- a. The Jews had their Feast of Unleavened Bread (_____)
 - b. The Romans had _____ - Eggs, orgies, fertility worship
3. Peter's Deliverance - it was not an escape (12:5-11)
- a. Because of _____ - made without ceasing by the whole church in Jerusalem (30,000 people praying for one person)
 - b. Because of _____ in Peter's heart - he had a rest that allowed him to sleep, even though he knew he faced death in the morning. Did not stay up all night praying for deliverance.
 - c. Because of God's _____ (James 4:13-15) - it was God's will that James should die, and that Peter should stay alive.
 - 1) God sent the angel of the Lord
 - a) Broke off Peter's chains
 - b) Put Peter's guards to sleep all throughout the prison
 - c) Opened every locked door
 - d) Commanded Peter to just follow him out!
 - 2) Peter realised this was no dream - it was _____! Peter did not have "great" faith, just a great God!
4. Peter's Report to the Christians (12:12-17)
- a. As he thought about all these events, he passed Mary's house (not Mary the mother of Jesus) - son's name is _____
 - b. He saw the lights on (at 5am), and knew they were praying for him - had been praying all night, and for the past 7 days
 - c. As Peter knocks to get in, Rhoda hears him, and is too excited to go and open the gate (she too is surprised God answered their prayers).
 - d. Absolutely nobody believes her, nor in the power of prayer - they all think it is just a spirit! It was the same when Jesus rose from the dead (Luke 24:9-12)!

Note: It is possible to pray about something for so long that you lose the goal, and get locked into the motions of the prayer instead of the fellowship, and dependence upon God.
 - e. Peter quiets them down telling them to get the news to James, the _____ of the church at Jerusalem, and to all the brethren who were still gathered praying (12:17). Peter then heads out of town until chapter 15.
5. What about the Guards? (12:18,19)
- a. They were _____ men - "no small stir!" Herod has them questioned, and then executes them!
 - b. Herod is therefore humiliated in front of the Jews whom he was showing off to. Kings hate to be humiliated - rely on perceptions!
 - c. So Herod goes to Caesarea (90 miles north)

C. The Demise of King Herod (12:20-23) The Price of Pride

1. Here in northern Israel, things seemed to go a little better for him
 - a. Herod controls a group of middle-eastern countries (Israel, and Samaria) under Roman rule. Rules them like a dictator.
 - b. He has succeeded in breaking the rebellion of the Tyre and Sidon region by an _____.
 - c. The people of Tyre and Sidon befriend Blastus hoping to soften Herod's anger - they want peace - under his control
 - d. Herod then has won control of the region
2. So Herod makes a show of his authority (12:21,22)
 - a. Shows-off by making an "oration" - believes in himself!
 - b. The people play along with him and feed his ego calling him "a ____" - they are desperate for him to think they love him - forced love that is!
3. But God makes a _____ out of him (12:23)
 - a. God wont let leadership get away with sin - even though they may be unsaved, or seem like they are untouchable (Luke 12:46-48; remember Rom 13:1-5)
 - b. Herod already knew enough about God and especially Christ.
 - c. Herod pays a high price - total humiliation, and _____ (Rom 6:23; Luke 14:11)

D. The Development of the Work (12:24,25)

1. God's word and work goes on - the only time it stops is when God's people think world events are more important than God's events.

2. Barnabas and Saul have been in Jerusalem with all the relief funds, and have finished working there, and now head back to _____ to continue to work and build there - they were anchored to the church of Antioch - loved it, and missed it when away.

II. Conclusion

III. Study Questions