

ACTS CHAPTER 12

Peter's Arrest and Deliverance (Acts 12:1-19)

Now about that time Herod the king laid hands on some who belonged to the church in order to mistreat them. This Herod the king was Agrippa I, grandson of Herod the Great, who murdered the male children from two years old and under in Bethlehem (Matthew 2:16). He was a nephew of Herod Antipas, who had beheaded John the Baptist (Matthew 14:3-12) and had tried Jesus (Luke 23:8-12).



Photo 11: A street in Bethlehem.

And this Herod the king had the apostle James, the brother of John the apostle and son of Zebedee (Matthew 4:21), put to death with a sword. When he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also. Now it was during the days of Unleavened Bread. These days was the week following the Passover meal, a week in which no leaven was allowed (Exodus 12:15-20; 13:3-7). When he had arrested him, he put him in prison, delivering him to four squads of soldiers to guard him. This means that Peter was being guarded by four soldiers for each of the four nightly watches of three hours. Herod the king had the intention after the Passover to bring him out before the people. So Peter was kept in the prison, but prayer for him was being made fervently by the church to God.

On the very night when Herod was about to bring him forward, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and guards in front of the door were watching over the prison.

And at once, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared and a light shone in the cell; and he struck Peter's side and woke him up, saying, "Get up quickly."

And his chains fell off his hands.

And the angel said to him, "Gird yourself and put on your sandals."

And Peter did so.

And the angel said to him, "Wrap your overcoat around you and follow me."

And he went out and continued to follow, and he did not know that what was being done by the angel was real, but thought he was seeing a vision. When they had passed the first and second guard, they came to the iron gate that leads into the city of Jerusalem, which opened for them by itself. And they went out and went along one street, and immediately the angel departed from him.

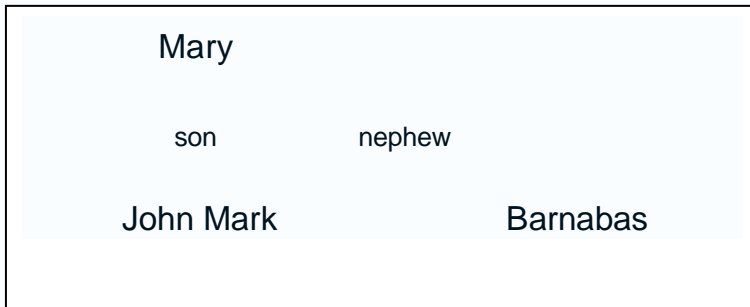


Photo 12:

Part of the city walls of
the Old City of
Jerusalem

When Peter came to himself, he said, “Now I know for sure that the Lord has sent forth His angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting.”

And when he realized this, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John who was also called Mark, where many were gathered together and were praying. John Mark is Barnabas’s cousin (see Colossians 4:10) and the author of the book of Mark.



Graphic 1. Showing the family relation between Mary, John Mark and Barnabas

When Peter knocked at the door of the gate, a servant-girl named Rhoda came to answer. When she recognized Peter’s voice, because of her joy she did not open the gate, but ran in and announced that Peter was standing in front of the gate.

They said to her, “You are out of your mind!”

But she kept insisting that it was so.

They kept saying, “It is his angel.”

Why did they say that it was Peter’s angel? Probably because of their belief that everyone has a personal angel who ministers to him (see Matthew 18:10 and Hebrews 1:14). They added the idea that such an angel occasionally showed himself and that his appearance resembled the person under his care.

But Peter continued knocking; and when they had opened the door, they saw him and were amazed. But motioning to them with his hand to be silent, he described to them how the Lord had led him out of the prison.

And he said, “Report these things to James and the brethren.”

Peter referred to James, the brother of the Lord and a leader in the Jerusalem church (see Galatians 1:19). Then he left and went to another place.

Now when day came, there was no small disturbance among the soldiers as to what could have become of Peter. When Herod had searched for him and had not found him, he examined the guards and ordered that they be led away to execution. Then he went down from Judea to Caesarea and was spending time there.



Map 3. Shows the location of Judea, Caesarea and Galilee

Death of Herod (Acts 12:20-25)

Now Herod was very angry with the people of Tyre and Sidon, the leading cities of Phoenicia (Lebanon today). And with one accord they came to him, because they were dependent on the grainfields of Galilee for their food. Having won over Blastus the king's chamberlain (trusted personal servant), they were asking for peace, because their country was fed by the king's country. On an appointed day Herod, having put on his royal apparel (outer garments), took his seat on the rostrum (an elevated platform for public speaking) and began delivering a speech to them.

The people kept crying out, “The voice of a god and not of a man!”

And immediately an angel of the Lord struck him because he did not give God the glory, and he was eaten by worms and died.



Map 5.
Shows the location of Tyre and Sidon

But the word of the Lord continued to grow and to be multiplied.

And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem after they had fulfilled their mission to deliver the contribution of the disciples in Syrian Antioch for the relief of the Judean brethren there. They took along with them John, who was also called Mark.

QUESTIONS OF ACTS CHAPTER 12

ALL ANSWERS CAN BE FOUND IN THE TEXT OF CHAPTER 12

1. What was Herod the king of Herod the Great and what was he of Herod Antipas?

2. Which apostle had this Herod the king put to death with a sword?

3. Why did Herod the king proceed to arrest the apostle Peter also?

4. What was Peter doing on the very night when Herod was about to bring him forward and in what situation?

5. When the angel and Peter had passed the first and second guard of the prison, they came to the iron gate that leads into the city of Jerusalem. How did they open it?

6. In the house of Mary, the mother of John who was also called Mark, many were gathered together and were praying. Who is John Mark?

7. What did they say when Rhoda announced that Peter was standing in front of the gate?

8. Why did they probably say that it was Peter's angel?

9. What did Herod do after he had searched for Peter and had not found him?

10. Why did an angel of the Lord struck Herod and how did he die?

ACTS CHAPTER 12 (NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE)

Peter's Arrest and Deliverance

1Now about that time Herod the king laid hands on some who belonged to the church in order to mistreat them. **2**And he had James the brother of John put to death with a sword. **3**When he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also. Now it was during the days of Unleavened Bread. **4**When he had seized him, he put him in prison, delivering him to four squads of soldiers to guard him, intending after the Passover to bring him out before the people. **5**So Peter was kept in the prison, but prayer for him was being made fervently by the church to God.

6On the very night when Herod was about to bring him forward, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and guards in front of the door were watching over the prison. **7**And behold, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared and a light shone in the cell; and he struck Peter's side and woke him up, saying, "Get up quickly." And his chains fell off his hands. **8**And the angel said to him, "Gird yourself and put on your sandals." And he did so. And he said to him, "Wrap your cloak around you and follow me." **9**And he went out and continued to follow, and he did not know that what was being done by the angel was real, but thought he was seeing a vision. **10**When they had passed the first and second guard, they came to the iron gate that leads into the city, which opened for them by itself; and they went out and went along one street, and immediately the angel departed from him. **11**When Peter came to himself, he said, "Now I know for sure that the Lord has sent forth His angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting." **12**And when he realized *this*, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John who was also called Mark, where many were gathered together and were praying. **13**When he knocked at the door of the gate, a servant-girl named Rhoda came to answer. **14**When she recognized Peter's voice, because of her joy she did not open the gate, but ran in and announced that Peter was standing in front of the gate. **15**They said to her, "You are out of your mind!" But she kept insisting that it was so. They kept saying, "It is his angel." **16**But Peter continued knocking; and when they had opened *the door*, they saw him and were amazed. **17**But motioning to them with his hand to be silent, he described to them how the Lord had led him out of the prison. And he said, "Report these things to James and the brethren." Then he left and went to another place.

18Now when day came, there was no small disturbance among the soldiers *as to* what could have become of Peter. **19**When Herod had searched for him and had not found him, he examined the guards and ordered that they be led away *to execution*. Then he went down from Judea to Caesarea and was spending time there.

Death of Herod

20Now he was very angry with the people of Tyre and Sidon; and with one accord they came to him, and having won over Blastus the king's chamberlain, they were asking for peace, because their country was fed by the king's country. **21**On an appointed day Herod, having put on his royal apparel, took his seat on the rostrum and *began* delivering an address to them. **22**The people kept crying out, "The voice of a god and not of a man!" **23**And immediately an angel of the Lord struck him because he did not give God the glory, and he was eaten by worms and died.

24 But the word of the Lord continued to grow and to be multiplied.

25 And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem when they had fulfilled their mission, taking along with *them* John, who was also called Mark.

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