

**and he
was eaten
of
worms**

Acts 12:1 – 25

~ **Our Spiritual Safari** expedition through the entire Word of God enters a period of severe and escalating persecution against the church as we roll into yet another new section of Scripture. Interestingly, in spite of the oppression, imprisonment, mistreatment and murdering of saints at the time in which we are studying, the church continues to grow. This is when the sound doctrine of the apostles began to be taught to the entire world. The Word of God being multiplied is the very wonderful subject of this report. Herod Agrippa I is the main instigator of said persecution. He is the son of Herod the Great. Of course, old man Herod "the Great" was the one who totally failed in his attempt to put Jesus to death in Bethlehem when Jesus was born. If there ever was an enemy of the Lord Jesus Christ, it was the family of Herod....

1 Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church.

~ This campaign was begun exclusively to please a certain group of people. Agrippa I is a blood-thirsty man with one ambition: to remain in power. Up until this time, the only persecution the church had experienced had come from religious rulers, particularly the Sadducees. Remember, after the Pharisees crucified Christ, they largely ignored the early church. Well, the governmental realm is picking up the cause now as hate spreads from religion to politics. The word "vex" seems to be an understatement. A brutal, unfeeling and atrocious genocide towards Christians and the church as a whole is the campaign that was being propagated....

2 And he killed James the brother of John with the sword.

3 And because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also. (Then were the days of unleavened bread.)

~ Understatement and blunt statements detail the account of James' murder as he becomes the second martyr in Scripture. I believe there had been many who had died for the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ by this time; but as far as the record is concerned, James is the second. We definitely need to note James was slain, but Peter miraculously preserved. I feel Agrippa was likely planning to execute Simon Peter in some horrific public manner soon after; but, either way, we have the miraculous preservation of him by the sovereign will of God working through the Holy Spirit which preserved the early church from an almost certain destruction. God still moves exactly this way today....

4 And when he had apprehended him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four quaternions of soldiers to keep him; intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people.

~ There is a certain sect of so-called Christians who feel like we shouldn't celebrate Christmas and Easter – or ANY holidays, for that matter – because they believe the holidays are pagan rituals and all that nonsense. Well, "Easter" in verse four would have been Passover. We know that because it was the time of unleavened bread. Anyways, for some reason, a small nation's army is assigned to guard Simon Peter! Agrippa must have expected someone to attempt a jail break for Simon Peter. Four quaternions is a whole bunch of soldiers: sixteen, to be exact. Of course, these soldiers were well aware of the embarrassment the other platoon dispatched to guard the grave of Jesus experienced; and they weren't about to have a repeat performance of that debacle....

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

~ Early Christian's didn't gather for rushed and hurried prayers, friends. They weren't there to eat snacks and sip gourmet coffee while demanding a to-do list be completed immediately by God! Our modern-day prayer meetings are about as dead as they can possibly be and, frankly, are an absolute abomination and waste of God's time. These saints were making earnest and sincere prayers continually day and night for Simon Peter to be

delivered from the hand of Herod. Their hearts were right in prayer, to be sure; because primarily, they were asking God to give them strength to endure the persecution of the cause of Christ. I can't find where they ever prayed for deliverance from the persecution – only the ability to endure it to the end.

Today, I hear many people say God hears ALL prayers. Well, Psalm sixty-six verse eighteen makes it abundantly clear that just isn't so. If you're going to make a prayer to the Lord, friends, your heart is going to have to be right with Him, or you're just going through a useless ritual of mumbling nothing. Now, I know you dear readers don't like that kind of talk from me – but you can read that Psalm for yourself after praying for wisdom, judgment and discernment. There's no point in trying to straighten me out. Those who regard iniquity in their heart, God does not hear their prayer. Period. He says so....

6 And when Herod would have brought him forth, the same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains: and the keepers before the door kept the prison.

~ Exactly how Simon Peter could sleep while chained up between two Roman soldiers has always been a mystery to me. Of course, we saw Peter fall asleep in the Garden of Gethsemane; so, apparently, Peter didn't have insomnia or any other sleep disorder. All Simon Peter had to do was get horizontal and his eyes closed! Personally, I think it takes a great confidence in God to be able to sleep under certain conditions. I don't know how the lost do it. Of course, that's a rhetorical statement; they do it with alcohol and drugs. Well, either way, Simon Peter sleeps so much he thinks he is dreaming this entire next sequence of events....

7 And, behold, the angel of the Lord came upon him, and a light shined in the prison: and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, Arise up quickly. And his chains fell off from his hands.

~ Now, "the" angel of the Lord should be translated "an" angel of the Lord. In the Old Testament, we learned that "the" Angel of the Lord was the preincarnate Lord Jesus Christ Himself. It is He Who appeared to Moses,

Joshua and others. At the time in which we are studying, the Lord Jesus is at God's right hand in a glorified body. So, this is NOT the Lord Jesus, but an angel sent forth by Him to perform this task! This angel delivers Peter, and the prayers of the church were answered. I am positive the Lord allowed all of this to transpire to prove to Peter that the Lord was with him, and able to deliver; and this appears to be the only account of an angel being connected with church affairs in the New Testament....

8 And the angel said unto him, Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals. And so he did. And he saith unto him, Cast thy garment about thee, and follow me.

9 And he went out, and followed him; and wist not that it was true which was done by the angel; but thought he saw a vision.

10 When they were past the first and the second ward, they came unto the iron gate that leadeth unto the city; which opened to them of his own accord: and they went out, and passed on through one street; and forthwith the angel departed from him.

11 And when Peter was come to himself, he said, Now I know of a surety, that the Lord hath sent his angel, and hath delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews.

12 And when he had considered the thing, he came to the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark; where many were gathered together praying.

~ At this particular time in early church history, and for about the following one hundred fifty years, the church never had a building proper that was called a church. We generally think of a church today as a designated structure where people can assemble. Well, the church is simply a body of believers; these church members never met in a public building in their lives. The early church began in the home, and my personal feeling is the genuine church on earth at the time of the rapture will be forced to meet in the home again. A public congregation will simply be too dangerous to be prudent in glorifying God at that time....

13 And as Peter knocked at the door of the gate, a damsel came to hearken, named Rhoda.

14 And when she knew Peter's voice, she opened not the gate for gladness, but ran in, and told how Peter stood before the gate.

15 And they said unto her, Thou art mad. But she constantly affirmed that it was even so. Then said they, It is his angel.

~ "Angel" in verse fifteen should read "spirit." I do not believe in "guardian angels" because, if I ever had one, it ran out of breath a long time ago. Now, if you want to think you have a guardian angel, that's fine. I choose to believe the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is superior to your guardian angel! You probably only do have the angel. What we see here in this passage is that Rhoda thinks she is seeing Simon Peter's spirit because she thinks Peter has been executed!

Interestingly, this church body is praying for Simon Peter to be delivered. When he is delivered, they don't believe it! Isn't that the way you and I pray? – Not really believing. When our prayers are answered, we usually act as if it's something we never expected to happen! Well, maybe you don't have that problem, but I sure do! This portion of the Bible just happens to be a great comfort to me. Even the early church with all of its dynamic power and energy didn't believe the miracle from God....

16 But Peter continued knocking: and when they had opened the door, and saw him, they were astonished.

17 But he, beckoning unto them with the hand to hold their peace, declared unto them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he said, Go shew these things unto James, and to the brethren. And he departed, and went into another place.

~ In other words, Peter got out of town immediately! Here is a case of miraculous deliverance; but Peter isn't going to test God, either. He's leaving. It stands to reason God could have miraculously kept him IN town!

I think many people today would argue that God has delivered them out of prison, so they would foolishly claim God would keep them; and, therefore, they would simply stand in defiance while “rebuking the devil” and all that utter nonsense. Their faith always becomes shipwrecked when the heat of persecution is turned up. Well, friends, God expects us to use our God-given common sense in these matters. So many people are NOT acting in good faith; what they’re doing is foolishly tempting God.... +

18 Now as soon as it was day, there was no small stir among the soldiers, what was become of Peter.

~ When Luke uses the statement “no small stir” – that’s what is known as a diminutive statement. This was a big deal. Peter had slipped away from Herod’s prestigious guard and embarrassed him. The soldiers began a house-to-house search. Well, Herod Agrippa I is a hard-hearted cold-blooded killer; and he’s not accepting insubordination. No, Agrippa plans to kill every one of the soldiers who allowed this to happen. They were dedicated and faithful soldiers to Herod and, without a second thought, they were murdered. As we read on, we see Herod go to Caesarea; and Caesarea was a resort area. After this bloody execution old man Herod Agrippa apparently needed a little vacation, it would seem....

19 And when Herod had sought for him, and found him not, he examined the keepers, and commanded that they should be put to death. And he went down from Judaea to Caesarea, and there abode.

20 And Herod was highly displeased with them of Tyre and Sidon: but they came with one accord to him, and, having made Blastus the king's chamberlain their friend, desired peace; because their country was nourished by the king's country.

~ Lets’ execute a thorough examination of an intrinsically evil man, Herod Agrippa I, before he is eaten up by worms. The men of Tyre and Sidon did business with this killer, so, they came crawling to him when the problem of Peter’s escape threatened the entire country’s economy. Herod is one pompous ass of a man: but everyone in the land bows before him. He’s quite the public speaker and one fantastic politician. Well, that status only

serves to artificially inflate Herod in his pride to the inth degree; as well as further blind him to his own hypocrisy. John said there were many anti-Christ's in that day; and here are several of them all together in one place. They are lifting up and making Herod a deity now. Well, God doesn't share His glory with man, friends. God absolutely hates the type of thing we are considering in this passage; turn over and read Proverbs chapter six beginning at verse sixteen. God hates the pride of mankind, my beloved. He doesn't use that. When it gets to this point, the judgment of God is handed down in the most severe way....

21 And upon a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne, and made an oration unto them.

22 And the people gave a shout, saying, It is the voice of a god, and not of a man.

23 And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost.

~ It would seem logical that with all of these happenings, the early church would be destroyed and simply disappear! The believers couldn't believe Simon Peter had been delivered in an answer to their prayers. I'm sure many thought the church would fall apart as Peter skipped town like a fugitive. Well, that's not the way God operates. The next verse is the verse that the Spiritual Safari claims – actually, I claim it as my own! Since I began this ministry, I have seen it grow right before my very eyes; and I just happen to believe it is an answer to prayers! Many people are secretly watching me, and they are, actually, praying I will fail. Don't think I don't know who you are, my little Jesus people friends who are really enemies of God – I know who and what you are all about – trust me. Make a note: persecution never hurts a church, and this safari is living proof of that! If you are a regular reader of these reports, then this is your church, too, by the way....

24 But the word of God grew and multiplied.

25 And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem, when they had fulfilled their ministry, and took with them John, whose surname was Mark.

~ In the next leg of our safari, we will see the church go out to the uttermost parts of the earth. Of course, we are still in this particular time frame today, friends. I hope you will get involved in your church on safari. You have an opportunity to help support me in reaching millions of people; I hope you don't waste that opportunity, because you WILL answer to God for your passive inaction. I am trying to take this Bible teaching ministry to the entire world and give them the whole Word of God in the sound doctrine of the apostles. I can't do it alone. I invite you today to go with me to the uttermost parts of the earth.

Only your gifts – both large and small – can make that happen. The most effective gift you can give me is prayer. Prayer is much more important than physical or material support. If your heart is right and your heart is in your prayer, God will answer in miraculous ways. Satan is NOT pleased with this ministry – you can just write that down – there are some very powerful people who would smile and have a cocktail in celebration if I failed at this time. So, I need your prayers and support to combat the powers of demonic and human enemies today. Are you receiving a blessing from these reports? If so, you have an obligation to it ~
