

The Book of Acts

Chapter 12

Growth of the New Testament Church

Quiz

2

- When the Jews “contended” with Peter, what does that mean?
 - To **contend** means to separate one's self in a hostile spirit, to oppose, or to strive with dispute.
- Whom did Peter say told him to go visit Cornelius?
 - The Holy Spirit
- How many Christians did Peter take with him to see Cornelius?
 - Six
- Whom did Cornelius say told him to call for Peter?
 - An angel

Quiz

3

- Whom did Peter remember saying that Christ would baptise believers in the Holy Spirit?
 - John the Baptist
- What did God use to motivate Christians to spread the Gospel?
 - Persecution
- Where is the area of Cyrene located?
 - Northern tip of Africa
- Who went to Tarsus to seek for Saul?
 - Barnabas

James killed and Peter imprisoned, v.1-3

4

- This was early in 44 AD since Herod died in late 44 AD.
 - A.T. Robertson states, “Herod Agrippa I, grandson of Herod the Great, was King of Palestine A.D. 42 to 44.”
- Herod reached out to vex (i.e., afflict or harm) Christians.
 - He killed James, John’s brother.
 - James was the first Apostle to die. John probably the last.
 - James was beheaded with a sword.
 - He imprisoned Peter
 - He did so because it pleased the Jews. He was a man-pleaser.
 - The days of Unleavened Bread were seven days that followed the Passover celebration.

Peter secured but Christians prayed, v.4-5

5

- Herod put Peter in prison and delivered him to four quaternions of soldiers.
 - Robertson states, “Four soldiers in each quaternion..., two on the inside with the prisoner (chained to him) and two on the outside, in shifts of six hours each, sixteen soldiers in all, the usual Roman custom. Probably Agrippa had heard of Peter's previous escape (5:19) and so took no chances for connivance [secret plot] of the jailors.”
 - He planned after Easter (i.e., Passover season) to kill him.
- Christians prayed without ceasing (i.e., intently, earnestly) for Peter.

Peter's angelic deliverance, v.6-10

6

- The night before his execution God intervened. **Last minute!**
- Peter was **sleeping** (not fretting) chained between two soldiers
- The angel of the Lord hit Peter to awaken him.
 - Note his words, v.7-8
 - His chains fell off!
 - Peter thought he saw a vision, v.9
 - They walked past the two wards (i.e., guards, guard stations).
 - The last iron gate swung open as a motion sensor door.
 - After walking past one street, the angel disappeared.

Peter found the prayer meeting, v.11-12

7

- Peter finally realised that he was not dreaming.
- Peter considered (i.e., put his thoughts together) his situation.
 - He decided to look for his Christian friends.
 - He must have believed they would be praying.
 - He knew where to look.
 - Mary's house must have been a common place that Christian's prayed.
- It is true that many were gathered there praying.
 - Prayer meetings are times for earnest prayer. We ought to gather with clean hearts ready and able to petition the Lord of heaven.

Peter knocked, v.13-16

8

- Peter knocked and Rhoda asked who knocked.
 - She is called a damsel (i.e., young girl, maid-servant or young female slave).
- When she recognised Peter, she left the gate shut, turned and ran to tell everyone, v.14
- Note the Christians' responses, v.15. **Though they lacked faith, God had answered their prayers.**
- Peter kept knocking and they opened the door.
- They were astonished (i.e., amazed, shocked).

Peter told of his deliverance, v.17

9

- Peter beckoned to them to be silent.
 - **Beckon** means to shake down, to signal with the hand
- Peter told them the whole store of how God delivered him.
- He told them to go tell James and the brethren
 - This James was probably the Lord's half brother.
 - Obviously, the prayer meeting was only a small group of believers.
- Peter then left and went to another place.
 - The word "another" refers to another of a different kind.
 - It is likely that Peter left the city completely that night.

Herod reacted in anger, v.18-19

10

- At daybreak, the soldiers were in a great tumult.
- They had no idea where or how Peter disappeared.
- Herod examined or investigated the keepers.
- Though it was not their fault, Herod had the keepers put to death.
- Herod then left Judaea and went **down** to Caesarea which was northwest.
 - Perhaps he went to escape embarrassment after Peter's escape.

Herod's sudden death, v.20-23

11

- Herod is in Caesarea. The people of Tyre and Sidon to the north had greatly enraged Herod.
- The people desired to make peace.
- Herod made a speech to them, v.21
- The people glorified him, v.22
- He took all the glory and God struck him and worms ate him and he died, v.23



God's Word spread, v.24-25

12

- Once again, we read that God's Word grew and multiplied.
 - God's Word is like a seed that grows and multiplies.
 - This was the result of three major events.
 - James' execution
 - Peter's deliverance from prison
 - Wicked Herod's sudden death
 - God used these events to convict and convert the lost.
- Barnabas and Saul returned **from** Jerusalem to Antioch, v.25
 - They took with them John Mark
 - It sounds like they had been in Jerusalem when Peter was delivered.

Applications for us today

13

- God uses persecution for His glory.
 - We should not look at persecution as being bad. Depend more on the Lord.
- Christians prayed continually for Peter.
 - Prayer should not be our last resort.
 - Prayer should be a priority in our lives.
- Peter was sleeping the night before his scheduled execution.
 - Peacefully trusting God during trials results from believing God is trustworthy.
- Those praying for Peter may have lacked faith, but God answered them.
 - Their prayers were persistent - to the end
 - Their prayers were passionate - life/death
- God is still able to do the impossible!
 - He can do the impossible if He chooses.
 - His glory is the key, not our pleasure.
- Herod stole God's glory and died.
 - We must be careful to always give God the glory for things He enables us to do.
 - Ponder Jeremiah 9:23-24