



Bethany Bible Study & Discussion

Acts 12

God's Sovereign Will

Wednesdays
7.30-8.30PM

- **James Martyred (1-2)** Who was James? Who was Herod? What motivated Herod to Kill James? Does the cruel end of James raise any questions in your mind?
- **Peter Delivered (3-17)** Why was Peter put in Prison? What was the Church doing during Peter's imprisonment? How many soldiers were guarding Peter? What was Peter's mental state? Who led Peter out of Prison? What happened to the Angel after Peter's deliverance? Why was the reaction of disciples surprising? Who is this James? Where did Peter go?
- **Herod Killed (18-23)** Why did Angel strike Herod? How did he die?
- **Lord's work continues (24-25)** What were Barnabas & Paul doing in Jerusalem? Where are they headed next? Who joined them?
- **Conclusion** God answers prayers, in His sovereign will

James Decapitated (1-2)

Who was James? Who was Herod?

What motivated Herod to Kill James?

Is the end of James surprising?

Does scripture warn us of 'suffering' for believers ?

Who was James?

- Son of Zebedee and Salome
- Fisherman
- Disciple of Jesus (call, Mathew 4:21,22)
- Brother of John (Sons of Thunder, Mark 3:17)
- James + John, often together (Mark 1:19,20; Matthew 4:21, Luke 5:1-11)
- Emotional (Luke 9:54)
- Part of the inner circle (with John and Peter)
- Witnessed Transfiguration (Matthew 17, Luke 9, Mark 9)
- Desired prominent seats by the side of the Lord (Mark 10:35-37)

James, first disciple (from 12) to be martyred

- Herod Agrippa I
 - grandson of Herod the Great (Matthew 2)
 - Follower of Law of Moses
 - Wanted to please Jews
- Decapitation of James motivated by political interest to please Jews

Cruel end of James ... some questions

- Why was James killed, but Peter spared?
- James was so close to Jesus, why did he have to get killed?
- If this is the end of a believer's journey, is it really worth it?

Blessing of Persecution

Mathew 5:10-12 (KJV) Blessed are they which have been persecuted for righteousness' sake ... Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great *is* your reward in heaven

Expectation of Suffering for Believers

I Peter 2:21 (NIV) **To this you were called**, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps

Matthew 16:24 (NIV) "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.

Peter Walks Away from a high security Prison

Why was Peter put in Prison? What was Herod intending to do with Peter? What was the Church doing during Peter's imprisonment? How many soldiers were guarding Peter? Who led Peter out of Prison? What happened to the Angel after Peter's deliverance? Where did Peter go after being set free? Why was the reaction of disciples surprising? Who is this James? What can we learn from the prayer life of the church?

Herod versus the Church

- Herod imprisons Peter
 - meant to kill Peter for political popularity with Jews
- Peter had escaped before (Acts 5:17-21), so kept under tighter security
- (Herod) used political power ... (Church) leans on spiritual power of prayer

How to respond to crisis? ... Pray (Philippians 4:6,7)

Philippians 4:6,7 Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God

Herod *versus* The Church: The Church Wins 🙏

A believer's life is a life of battles (Ephesians 6:12) but **Lord will provide protection & victory, in His will**

- We should be fully equipped at all times (Armor of God, Ephesians 6:10-18))
- We should not take the enemy lightly (Roaring Lion, I Peter 5:8)
- We should cast our burden on the Lord (Psalms 55:22, I Peter 5:7)

Don't be burdened and overwhelmed

Psalms 68:19 (NIV) Praise be to the Lord, to God our Savior, who **daily** bears our burdens

Peter set free from high security Prison

- Sleeping (shows no anxiety, sign of faith in God, John 21:18)
- Shackled, surrounded by soldiers, secured by prison doors
- Angel appears and Prison security is of no use (God's answer to church prayer)
 - Chains fell off
 - Went past prison guards
 - Iron gate opened on its own
 - Peter delivered from prison (again)
- Angel departs, having accomplished the work
- Peter realizes it is not a dream!

LORD CAN SET US FREE FROM ANY SITUATION!

Peter visits (praying) believers

- Church was praying without ceasing (sincerely, with burden) (all night prayer!)
- What was the reaction of believers? Why is it surprising?
 - They did not believe prayers were answered, even though had been praying
 - We need to pray in Faith, expecting God to answer!
 - God answered prayer, despite their lack of complete faith
- Peter shares his testimony of deliverance by the Lord
- Peter departs – destination unknown (and is not mentioned in Acts again)

Herod's End

Why did Angel strike Herod?

How did he die?

What do we learn?

Herod's disgraceful end

- Makes peace with people of Tyre and Sidon
- Addressed the crowd in Royal apparel
- Crowd flattered him by equating him with God, and Herod did not object and took all the glory
- Angel strikes Herod dead for taking God's glory
- Herod is eaten by worms and dies

Isaiah 42:8 (NIV) "I am the LORD; that is my name! I will not yield my glory to another or my praise to idols"

Lord's work continues (24-25)

What were Barnabas & Paul doing in Jerusalem?

Where are they headed next?

Who joined them?

Lord's work continues

- What were Barnabas & Paul doing in Jerusalem?
 - Bringing the gift from Antioch church
- Where are they headed next?
 - Back to Antioch, after fulfilling their ministry in Jerusalem
- Who joined them?
 - Mark John (writer of Mark gospel)

Verse 24 "But the word of God grew and multiplied"

Conclusion

God answers prayers, in His sovereign will

Lessons in Prayer

- There is great power when church comes together in prayer
- Prayer life (relationship with God) is strengthened during severe trials
- We need to pray in faith, with expectation
- God answers prayers, in His sovereign will
- **God may not answer prayers if we:**
 - Ask for wrong thing (James 4:3)
 - Ask before the fullness of time (Galatians 4:4, Ecclesiastes 3:1)
 - Ask with sin in our heart (Isaiah 59:1-2, Psalms 66:18)
 - Ask outside of God's will (I John 5:14)
- **Some prayers are better if not answered**

Psalms 106:15 (KJV) And He gave them their request, But sent leanness into their soul.

God's sovereign will

- God's sovereign will

Ephesians 1:11 (NIV) In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will,

Isaiah 46: 10 (NIV) I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say, 'My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please.'

- Is God's sovereign will knowable?
- Believers are responsible for obeying God's **revealed will**
 - God's will is revealed mostly through His Spirit and through His Word
 - God can also reveal His will through visions/dreams, circumstances, other believers
 - **Are we living in subjection to His revealed will for our lives?**



ACTS REVIEW

Do we remember?

Acts Review:

Do we remember?

1

- Author of Acts, Kingdom of God, Lord's Ascension
- Waiting for Holy Spirit, The Mission, Replacement for Judas

2

- Arrival of Holy Spirit, Difference in spirit between OT and NT
- Speaking in Tongues (Source, Purpose, Appropriate use) Peter's Sermon (Message, Last days) when is Holy Spirit given, Birth of Church and Characteristics of church

3

- First Healing (how? Parallel to sinner's experience)
- Peter's Sermon model (Question, Introduces Jesus, Confronts Mistakes, offers path to Repentance & Restoration, refers to Prophecies, Result)

Do we Remember?

4

- First Persecution-reason and verdict, Sanhedrin, Peter & John's response, Church Response, God's response, Caring Church, 2nd pouring of the Holy Spirit

5

- Church Discipline: Purpose, Example, Outcome
- Second Persecution: Reason, Peter's message to council, Response to beatings, Impact on Ministry

6

- Addressing Problems in church using godly decision making process
- Delegating to effectively exercise priority in use of gifts and talents

Do we Remember?

7

Stephen: Great man of God, Falsely accused, Confronts the council, Stoned to death, Received by Christ

8

- Growing Persecution, but positive outcomes.
- Successful ministry of Philip in Samaria, Questionable salvation of Simon, significance of laying on of hands
- Philip's outreach to Eunuch leading to baptism. Baptism.
- How can we be effective evangelists?

9

- Paul's old mission
- Paul's encounter with Jesus, Meeting with Annanias, baptism
- Paul's first ministry in Damascus
- Evidence of Paul's true salvation and transformed life
- Physical healing of Aenas and Tabitha

Do we Remember?

10

Heavenly visions of Cornelius and Peter; Response of Cornelius and Peter to the vision; Impact of Peter's message @ Cornelis home; Gospel reaches gentiles

11

Disciples reaction to Peter's interaction with disciples, Peter's humble response and the outcome of such attitude; Barnabas visit to Antioch church; Disciples called Christians; Antioch, a giving church; Blessing of Persecution

12



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