

# LESSON 11

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## THE POWER OF PRAYER

### **JAMES THE APOSTLE KILLED BY HEROD (12:1, 2)**

Chapter 12 emphasizes the importance and power of prayer. Many Bible stories illustrate the value of prayer. None are more striking than the story of Peter's deliverance from prison in Acts 12. Since the conversion of Saul, the church in Jerusalem had enjoyed a period of peace (9:31); now that peace was shattered.

1. How did this persecution of the church differ from the previous two recorded in Acts?
2. What was the family and personal history of Herod Agrippa I?
3. What sort of relationship did Herod have with the Jews?
4. Why did Herod instigate this persecution of the church?
5. Who was the James that was killed in this persecution?

### **PETER IMPRISONED BY HEROD (12:3–5)**

The response of the people to the decapitation of James was everything Herod could have hoped for. Herod decided that if killing the number three apostle made them happy, killing the number one apostle should make them his loyal subjects for life.

6. Why might Luke have added the editorial note that this took place during the days of Unleavened Bread?
7. What did Herod do beyond the norm to ensure that Peter did not escape?
8. What is impressive about the fact that the church was involved in fervent prayer for Peter?

### **GOD ANSWERS PRAYER (12:6–17)**

Although we may not get exactly what we pray for, fervent prayer and patient endurance are always rewarded by God. The next few verses tell the dramatic story of the power of prayer.

9. What was Peter doing that was remarkable on the night he was to be killed?
10. What details of the story make clear that the claim that someone bribed the guard to allow Peter's escape is nonsense?
11. How many miracles took place in Peter's release, and what were they?
12. What can we gather about Mary, in whose house the church had gathered to pray?
13. What indication is there that Peter had spent a good deal of time in Mary's household?
14. What did the believers in Mary's house mean when they suggested, "It is his angel" in 12:15?
15. Where might Peter have gone when he left Mary's house?

### **THE DEATH OF HEROD (12:18–24)**

This section is the sequel to the story of Peter's miraculous deliverance from prison.

16. What happened to the guards when Peter's escape was discovered?
17. What was the nature of the situation that led to Herod addressing the people in 12:21?
18. What might have been the nature of the ailment that God used to kill Herod?
19. What ramifications did the death of Herod have that were significant to the future of the church and to the Jews?

## **BARNABAS AND SAUL RETURN TO ANTIOCH IN SYRIA (12:25)**

If Luke's account is chronological, Barnabas and Saul arrived in Judea about the time "Herod the king laid hands on some who belonged to the church" (12:1), and they were in the area when James was killed and Peter was put in prison. Barnabas and Saul might even have been present at the prayer meeting that took place in the home of Mary.

20. How was John Mark related to Barnabas?