

ACTS 12:12-25

A. Peter's reunion with those who had been praying for him -

Acts 12:12-16 - 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. Acts 12:13 And as Peter knocked at the door of the gate, a damsel came to hearken, named Rhoda. Acts 12:14 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. Acts 12:15 And they said unto her, Thou art mad. But she constantly affirmed that it was even so. Then said they, It is his angel. Acts 12:16 But Peter continued knocking: and when they had opened *the door*, and saw him, they were astonished.

1. Remember, Peter's life was to continue because of the **promise** Jesus had made to him in John 21:18 - Peter would live to be an **old** man. That is why Herod's plan to execute Peter could not succeed.
2. Note: Acts 12:5 - [Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him.]

- a. John Mark's mother, Mary, must have been a **wealthy** woman since she had servants and a very large house to accommodate all of these believers. The fact that Peter knew to go there shows that he had been there **before**.
- b. Isn't it strange how faith and **unbelief** can be together in a believer's heart? Many had been praying for Peter's release, yet at first it is only a **young** girl who believed it was really Peter knocking at the door.

****Rhoda did not even open the door for Peter to come in, for her gladness overtook her. Isn't it funny how sometimes younger believers put to shame older believers by their **simple** and humble faith? The older believers thought that it must be some spirit or angel, but surely not Peter.**

Question? What were they praying for? Why the surprise then that it was Peter? It was because they still lacked faith that God would answer their prayers.

Mark 9:23-24 - Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things *are* possible to him that believeth. Mark 9:24 And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.

- c. With Rhoda's continued insistence that it was Peter and Peter's continued knocking, they finally opened the door and to their amazement - it was Peter!

B. Peter reveals a changing of the guard -

1. Peter understood Herod's **evil** side and his desire to slay him. So Peter quiets this prayer group, so as not to disturb the neighbors who might send word to Herod. Peter rightfully thought his escape would

Acts 12:17 - 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.

cause a stir, so he then departed to another unknown place so things would quiet down. Peter does not tell them where he is going in order to **protect himself and them**, in case the soldiers ever questioned them.

2. Question? Why did Peter tell his friends to report these things to James?

- a. It is here for the **first** time that we get an intimation that James, the Lord's brother according to the flesh (Mary-Joseph), was becoming the leader of the Jerusalem Church.
- b. Remember that Peter was the chief of the apostles and to him was given the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven (heaven on earth-Deut. 11:21; Matt. 16:17-19).

*But now all that has **changed**. After Israel's rejection of God's promised Kingdom-with Christ returning to set it up, Peter's leadership has been **replaced** at the Church in Jerusalem by the Lord's brother, James.

3. As we study Scripture, we are somewhat shocked to find that Jesus' brothers and sisters did not **believe** in/on Christ while He was on earth doing ministry!

- a. John 7:5 - [For neither did his brethren believe in him.]
- b. Psalms 69:8 - [I am become a stranger unto my brethren, and an alien unto my mother's children.]
- c. Matthew 13:55-57 - [Is not this the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? Matt. 13:56 And his sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then hath this *man* all these things? Matt. 13:57 And they were offended in him. But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and in his own house.]
- d. It was later, **after** the cross and resurrection, that they believed.

Acts 1:14 - [These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.]

4. So, we see the authority of the Messianic Church at Jerusalem was **gradually** changing and passing from Peter to the Lord's brother, James.

*Here in Acts 12:17, Peter is actually **reporting** to James! Even later Paul tells of James alone with Peter at the Jerusalem Church.

Galatians 1:19 - But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother.

- a. It will be James who leads the council at Jerusalem and makes the **final** decision on Paul's ministry of salvation with **out** the Law.

Acts 15:19 - Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God:

*James' decision is with Peter and the other apostles present (Acts 15:4, 7).

- b. At Antioch, Peter was **intimidated** by Jewish brethren who came from James.

Galatians 2:11-12 - But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. Gal. 2:12 For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision.

- (1) Note: After Acts 15, there is no mention of any of the 12 in the book of Acts. At Paul's last visit to Jerusalem, notice who he mentions as Jerusalem's leader.

Acts 21:18 - [And the *day* following Paul went in with us unto James; and all the elders were present.]

- (2) * Peter and the other apostles finally gave place to James and the elders in Jerusalem's * Church. Paul gave the order of authority of the leaders at the Jerusalem Messianic Church.

Galatians 2:9 - And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we *should go* unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision.

- c. Except for his brief appearance in Acts 15, Peter fades off the scene in Acts. From then on out the story/ministry revolves around Paul, the apostle to the Body Mystery Church.

C. Herod's cruelty continues -

Acts 18:19 - Now as soon as it was day, there was no small stir among the soldiers, what was become of Peter. Acts 12:19 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.

1. At daylight, when Peter is not in the prison, the guards are interrogated as to what happened and how he got out? Herod, true to his depraved heart, has all of the guards who were responsible to watch Peter put to death. They had ruined his plans to execute Peter to gain favor of the Jews.
2. Herod apparently gave up on his campaign of persecution of the Little Flock believers after Peter's escape. Perhaps he understood that he was dealing with power greater than his own. So Herod leaves Judaea and goes down to Caesarea.

D. Herod reaps his judgment from God -

Acts 12:20-23 - 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*. Acts 12:21 And upon a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne, and made an oration unto them. Acts 12:22 And the people gave a shout, *saying*, It is the voice of a god, and not of a man. Acts 12:23 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.

1. God was through with Herod, or He was fed up with him. God, being omniscient, had seen all of Herod's evil actions. Payday - someday had come!
2. Evidently Herod had become angry and upset with Tyre and Sidon. They had, in some way, caused Herod's displeasure to such a degree that he was about to make war with them. Though they were outside Herod's jurisdiction, they had been fed by the region ruled by Herod (I Kings 5:11; Ezra 3:7; Ezekiel 27:17).
 - a. *Tyre and Sidon knew the danger of having Herod (Roman backed) irate with them, so they came to him in one accord and unity - using the king's chamberlain to mediate between them and the king. Herod agrees to terms and then sets up a special day in which he could speak to the people.

- b. Upon the appointed day, Herod appears wearing his royal apparel. This was in the amphitheater built by Agrippa's grandfather, Herod the Great. Herod's garment was made of **silver**. In the sun, it was **ill**uminated with a **glow** to it as the people looked on. Applauding Herod's speech for political gain, the people began to shout that Herod's voice was like a god's. Herod does **not** rebuke them, nor reject their flattery.
- c. As Herod stands to receive worship that only the true God deserves, **God** moves quickly to judge Herod by causing worms to **eat** him.

****Josephus said:** "Herod had to be carried away, writhing and groaning in pain! Herod lingered for **five** days in terrible pain and agony, dying a shameful death."

3. Herod's speech, no doubt went out not only to Tyre and Sidon, but also to the general public. The fact that he is "King of the Jews" to the **religious** leaders in Jerusalem, shows the depth of Israel's **apo**stasy.

****The reason I mention this is because King Herod is a type of the coming Man of **Sin**!**

- a. **Stam:** "Herod, whose reign over Israel was backed by Caesar's power rather than by royal right, was a type of Antichrist, who, backed by the power of the world ruler, called "the **Beast**", will one day pose as Israel's divine King and receive the **wor**ship of mankind."
- b. The Antichrist, like Herod, also will be **sud**denly killed by the Lord.

John 5:43 - I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive.

Daniel 11:36 - And the king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished: for that that is determined shall be done.

II Thessalonians 2:3-4, 8 - Let no man deceive you by any means: for *that day shall not come*, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; 2Thess. 2:4 Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God. 2Thess. 2:8 And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming:

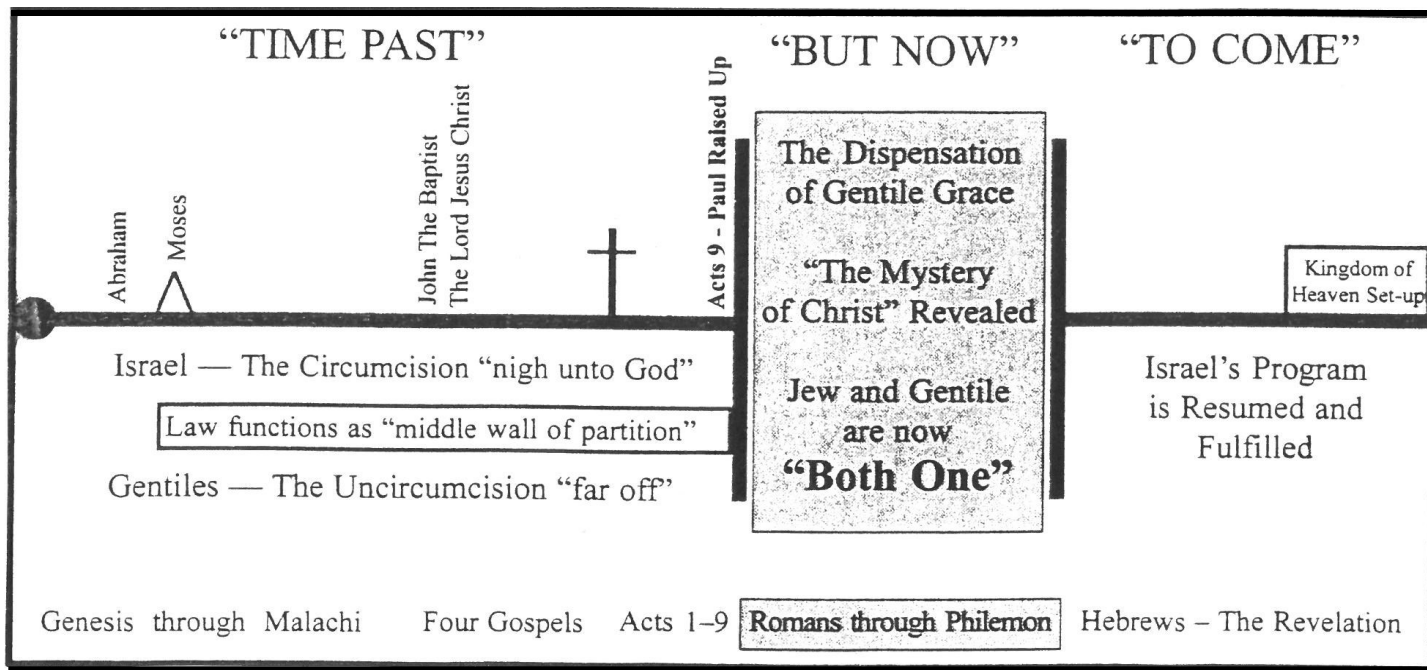
E. God's work-moving continues -

Acts 12:24-25 - But the word of God grew and multiplied. Acts 12:25 And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem, when they had fulfilled *their* ministry, and took with them John, whose surname was Mark.

1. Although Herod's words were silenced by "the angel of the Lord", God's Word **spread** and flourished greatly. God's judgment often, on the opposite end, brings His blessings, and here the Word lives **on**!
2. After Paul and Barnabas deliver offerings from the Church at Antioch to the Jerusalem Church, they return to Antioch bringing John Mark with them to **help** with the ministry. John Mark was Barnabas' nephew (Col. 4:10), the son of Mary - at whose home the prayer meeting for Peter took place (Acts 12:12).

Note: Dr. Charles Baker says: "Verse 25 gives the impression that they were in Jerusalem during Herod's persecution. However, Herod died in 44 A.D. and the famine did not start until at least a year later. It would seem that Herod was already dead when Paul and Barnabas left on their relief mission."

3. *This last verse returns the narrative to Antioch, which becomes the headquarters of the new dispensational church with the new grace doctrine. Here Paul is in the forefront again as the main focus and his mystery ministry starts to quickly evolve. All this indicates a change in dispensations from Kingdom to Paul's Christ-given Mystery Body Program - "But Now".



Time Past: Ephesians 2:11-12 - [Wherefore remember, that ye *being* in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; Eph. 2:12 That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world:]

But Now: Ephesians 2:13 - [But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.]

Ages To Come: Ephesians 2:7, 1:21 - [That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in *his* kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. Eph. 1:21 Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come.]